





EURIPIDES.

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THE REV. R. POTTER, M.A.
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"A correct translation, always faithful, sometimes elevated"
-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL MISCELLANY.

H E C U B A.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

GHOST OF POLYDORUS.

HECUBA.

POLYXENA.

ULYSSES.

TALTHYBIUS.

AGAMEMNON.

POLYMESTOR.

FEMALE ATTENDANT.

CHORUS of Trojan dames.

H E C U B A.

ARGUMENT.

DURING the period that the Grecian fleet is detained on the coast of Thrace, on their return from the siege of Troy, the ghost of Achilles appears in the middle of the night, and demands the sacrifice of Polyxena, the daughter of Priam: the maiden is accordingly torn from the embraces of her mother, and put to death. Shortly after, a dead body is cast on the shore, which Hecuba immediately recognises to be that of her son Polydorus, whom King Polymestor, his guardian, had barbarously murdered, in order to secure to himself those treasures with which the young man had been amply supplied by his indulgent father. Bent on the prosecution of her revenge, Hecuba secures the interest of Agamemnon in her behalf, and sends for the perfidious monarch, with his two sons, whom she and her companions delude with a specious discovery of secreted wealth; till, seizing a favourable opportunity, they put to death the two princes, and deprive Polymestor of his eyes. This outrage is made the subject of formal complaint to Agamemnon, who exculpates Hecuba.—
[The scene is before the Grecian tents, on the coast of the Thracian Chersonese.]

GHOST OF POLYDORUS.

THE mansions of the dead, the gates of darkness,
Where Pluto dwells from the bless'd gods apart,
I leave, the son of Hecuba and Priam.
When danger threatened that the Phrygian state
Would sink beneath the conquering spear of Greece,
He, fearing for his much-loved Polydore, 6
In secret sent me from the Trojan land,

To Polymestor's court, his Thracian friend,
 Bound to him by each hospitable tie ;
 Who cultivates this fertile Chersonese, 10
 And with his spear a warlike people rules.
 With me he sent in secret stores of gold,
 That, if the walls of Troy should fall, his sons,
 Whoe'er survived, might find a rich support.
 I was the youngest of the sons of Priam, 15
 And therefore sent, because my youthful arm
 Could not sustain the shield, or hurl the spear.
 While Troy's strong bulwarks stood, and her high
 towers
 Unshaken, and while Hector's spear prevail'd,
 The Thracian rear'd me with a father's care, 20
 And I, like some fair plant, grew up and flourish'd.
 But when Troy sunk, her Hector now no more,
 And Priam's palace smok'd upon the ground,
 Himself upon the hallow'd altar fallen,
 Slain by Achilles' blood-polluted son, 25
 This hospitable friend, to seize my gold,
 Kill'd me, and rudely toss'd my lifeless corse
 Into the billows of the surging sea :
 There yet it lies, now dash'd upon the strand,
 Now whelm'd beneath the tide's returning wave, 30
 Unwept, unburied. For my mother's sake
 I wander, having left my breathless body.
 Three days I hover here, for now three days
 Hath the unhappy Hecuba from Troy
 Continued on the abhorred Chersonese : 35
 Here all the Grecians hold their anchor'd ships,
 And sit inactive on the Thracian shore ;
 For Peleus' son, appearing o'er his tomb,
 Achilles, hath detained the Argive troops,
 As they directed home their sea-dipp'd oars : 40
 Polyxena, my sister, he demands,

11 In the martial times of antiquity the spear was revered as something divine, and signified the chief command in arms it was also the *insigne* of the highest civil authority.

A victim dear, to grace his honour'd tomb :
 Nor shall he not be gratified ; so high
 His grateful friends revere his mighty name.
 This day fate leads my sister to her death : 45
 Two lifeless bodies shall the mother see
 Of her two children ; that unhappy virgin's
 And mine. The rites of sepulture to obtain,
 Before a female slave will I appear
 Here on the wave-washed shore ; for from the
 powers 50
 That rule beneath, this grace have I implored,
 To find a tomb, and by my mother's hand.
 These desired honours shall be mine : but far
 From the aged Hecuba will I withdraw,
 Who now from Agamemnon's tent advances, 55
 Affrighted at the vision which I sent.
 Alas, my mother ! who from royal seat
 Hast seen the day of slavery : ill thou farest,
 Worse for the change from well ; thy former state
 Sunk by some god, and counterpoised with ruin. 60

HECUBA, CHORUS.

HEC. Lead me, ye Trojan dames, a little onward,
 A little onward lead an aged matron,
 Now your poor fellow-slave, but once your queen.
 Take me, support me, lead me, bear me up,
 Holding my aged hand : myself the while 65
 Will lean upon this bending staff, and guide
 The slow advances of my feeble feet.
 Thou beaming light of day ! Ye shades of night !
 With phantoms thus, with terrors of the dark,
 Why am I thus distracted ? And, O Earth, 70
 Thou awful mother of black-winged dreams,
 Avert these visions of the night, which late
 Dreams of my son kindly in Thrace preserved,
 Dreams of Polyxena, my much-loved daughter,
 Presented to my soul : I saw, I knew, 75
 I understood the vision, dreadful sight !
 Gods of this land, preserve my son, who now,

The sole remaining pillar of my house,
 Amid the hospitable snows of Thrace
 Finds a protector in his father's friend. 80
 Yet I forebode some ill : some dismal tidings
 Will jar in harsh notes on our wounded ears ;
 For my soul shivers with unwonted terrors.
 Tell me, ye Trojan dames, where find I now
 The divine spirit of my Helenus, 85
 Where my Cassandra's, to expound my dreams ?
 I saw a dappled fawn torn from my bosom,
 Forcibly torn by the wolf's bloody gripe,
 And slaughter'd, piteous sight ! Dreadful to me
 This vision : dreadful that which late appear'd 90
 O'er proud Achilles' tomb ; for he demands
 A victim, some unhappy Trojan dame.
 But from my daughter, suppliant I entreat you,
 Gods, from my daughter far avert this ill !
 CHO. With quick pace, Hecuba, to thee I fly, 95
 Leaving the proud tents of our lords, by lot
 Where I am doomed a slave, enthrall'd beneath
 The Grecian spear, and dragg'd from Ilium's walls ;
 Not to alleviate thy miseries,
 But, loaded with the weight of heavy news, 100
 A messenger of griefs, lady, to thee.
 The Greeks in council have decreed to give
 Thy daughter as a victim to Achilles :
 Thou know'st that he, appearing o'er his tomb
 In all his golden arms, stopp'd their fleet ships, 105
 Their sails unfurl'd and waving in the wind,
 Calling aloud, " And is it thus, ye Greeks,
 You speed your course, my tomb unhonour'd left ?"
 The waves of much contention soon arose,
 The warrior troops dividing their resolves, 110
 The victim some to offer, some refuse.
 The royal Agamemnon strove with zeal
 To favour thee, and cultivate the love
 Of the inspired Cassandra ; but the sons
 Of Theseus, the Athenian chiefs, talk'd high, 115
 Propounding each a different argument ;

In this according both,—with purple blood
 To grace Pelides' tomb, and not prefer
 Cassandra's bed before the hero's spear.
 High the debate, and doubtful the event, 120
 Till now Ulysses, wily sophister,
 Steeping his words in honey to allure
 The populace, advised them not to slight
 The noblest Greek to spare a captive's blood;
 Nor let the slain, standing near Proserpine, 125
 Complain that Greece is thankless to her heroes,
 Who for their country died on Ilium's plain.
 Soon, very soon, Ulysses will be here
 To tear the tender virgin from thy bosom,
 And drag her from thy aged arms. But go, 130
 Go to the temples, to the altars go;
 Fall supplicant at Agamemnon's knees;
 Invoke the gods of heaven, the gods beneath:
 Either thy prayers must save thee from the loss
 Of this unhappy daughter, or thine eyes 135
 Behold her fallen a victim at the tomb,
 Her virgin limbs purpled with blood, that wells
 In dark streams from her golden-tressed neck.
 HEC. O miserable me! What voice of wo,
 What plaints, what lamentations shall I utter, 140
 Wretched through wretched age, and slavery,
 Harsh, unsupportable? O wretch, wretch, wretch,
 Who will protect me now? What child, what
 state?
 My husband is no more, my sons no more.
 Where shall the unhappy find relief? What god, 145
 What pitying power will succour my distress?
 Ye messengers of ill, destructive ill,
 You have undone me, ruin'd me; no more,
 The light of life hath no more charms for me.
 Lead my unhappy steps, lead my old age 150
 Nearer this tent. My daughter, O thou child
 Of a most wretched mother, come, come forth;
 It is thy mother's voice: come forth, my child,

That I may tell thee all this tale of wo,
A tale no less importing than thy life. 155

HECUBA, POLYXENA, CHORUS.

POL. I come: but why, why calls my mother
thus?

What new affliction hast thou now to tell,
That thus thou draw'st me trembling from the tent,
Like a poor bird affrighted from its nest?

HEC. Alas, my child!

POL. Why those ill-boding words,
Ominous to me? 160

HEC. Thy life, alas, thy life—

POL. Speak to me, tell me, hide it not from me.
I fear, I fear: why heaves that deep-drawn sigh?

HEC. My child, thou child of an unhappy mother!

POL. Tell me thy grief.

HEC. Pelides' ruthless son, 165
With the united suffrage of all Greece,
Urges to slay thee at his father's tomb.

POL. These are indeed unmeasurable ills.
But tell me, tell me all.

HEC. I do, my child;
A tale that chokes my voice, the votes of Greece 170
Touching thy life.

POL. Unhappy mother, sunk
Beneath affliction, and the miseries
Of painful life, destined to suffer wrongs
Abhorr'd, unutterable! Now no more
Shall thy sad daughter tend thy wretched age, 175
Wretched herself in joint captivity;

For thou shalt see me torn from thy fond arms,
And like a mountain heifer sacrificed
To the infernal powers, untimely sent
To the dark regions of eternal night: 180

There 'mong the dead unhappy shall I lie.
But, my afflicted mother, 'tis for thee
I pour these plaints, and for thy childless age.
My life, my wrongs, my ignominious fate

I mourn not ; death to me is happiness, 185
 And triumph o'er the tyranny of fortune.

CHO. But see, with hasty step Ulysses comes,
 Bringing, be sure, some message of fresh ill.

ULYSSES, HECUBA, POLYXENA, CHORUS.

ULYS. Lady, the purpose of the host, I ween,
 Is not to thee unknown ; yet I must speak it. 190

Polyxena, thy daughter, on the tomb
 High to Achilles raised, a victim Greece
 Decrees : to lead the virgin is my charge.

The hero's son, presiding o'er the rites,
 Waits to receive her. How wilt thou resolve ? 195

Advise thee : be not dragg'd away by force,
 Nor tempt the rude touch of a stronger hand :
 Weigh well the power, the presence of thy ills.
 To bear afflictions as we ought is wise.

HEC. It comes, alas ! the dreadful trial comes, 200
 Of lamentation full, nor void of tears.

And yet I am not dead : would I were dead !

Jove hath not yet destroy'd me ; yet I live

To bear affliction on affliction, each,

O miserable ! greater than the former. 205

But may slaves be permitted of the free

To ask—I mean no rudeness, no reproach—

But may we ask ? And wilt thou answer us ?

ULYS. You may ; ask freely : I allow the time.

HEC. Dost thou remember when thou cam'st to

Troy 210

A spy, disfigured in vile weeds ? Thine eyes

Rain'd drops of death, that trickled down thy beard.

ULYS. The impression was too strong to be erased.

HEC. But Helen knew thee, and told me alone.

ULYS. The mighty danger I remember well. 215

HEC. Then lowly lay'st thou grovelling at my
 knees.

ULYS. So that my cold hand died within thy robe.

HEC. I saved thee then, and sent thee from the
 town.

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ULYS. Hence I behold the light of this fair sun.

HEC. What didst thou say, when thou wast then
my slave? 220

ULYS. Pleading for life, I could find many words.

HEC. Thus thine own counsels prove thee base :
thy life

I saved ; thy words confess it : thou returnest
To us no good, but always extreme ill.

A thankless tribe you are, who file your tongues 225

To popular grace : would I had never known you !

Of injuries to friends you reck not, if

Your fine speech wins the favour of the people.

But why these artful trains to allure their voice

Thus to decree the murder of my child ? 230

What dire necessity compels you thus

A human victim at the tomb to slay ?

Or doth Achilles, with just rage inflamed

'Gainst those that wrought his death, intend her
death ?

She never did him wrong : let him demand 235

Your Helen as a victim to his tomb ;

She wrought his death by drawing him to Troy.

If some illustrious captive, some choice beauty,

Must be devoted, beauty is not ours :

The accomplish'd Helen boasts superior charms, 240

Not less injurious found than we have been. *7.20*

These things I urge in equitable plea.

But at my suit what grace thou shouldst requite,

Hear : thou hast touch'd my hand, thou hast fallen
down

(Thou own'st it too), a suppliant at my knees ; 245

And now thy hand I touch, thy knees I grasp :

Requite that grace, I beg thee, I conjure thee ;

Tear not my daughter from me, slay her not :

We have already had enough of death.

In her delighted I forget my griefs : 250

The sole remaining comfort of my age,

My kingdom she, my nurse, my staff, my guide.

Ill it becomes the great to show their greatness

In unbeseeming insolent commands ;
 Nor should the prosperous too proudly deem 255
 Their high state steadfast, and exempt from change.
 I once was so, but now am so no more ;
 One day tore from me all my happiness.
 But reverence thy suppliant, pity me,
 Go to the troops, address them, let them know 260
 How infamous it is to murder women,
 Dragg'd from the altars, whom before they spared.
 Teach them to pity us. 'The laws of blood
 Are equal to us slaves, and you our lords.
 Speak thou but ill, thy dignity shall move them : 265
 'Tis not the counsel, but the speaker's worth,
 That gives persuasion to his eloquence.

CHO. The sternest and the most unfeeling nature,
 Hearing thy lamentable plaints, must melt,
 And drop the sweet dew of impassioned pity. 270

ULYS. Hecuba, be advised : let not thy rage
 Deem him thine enemy who reasons well.
 To thee I owe my safety ; in return,
 Thy person I am ready to protect.
 But what I counsell'd 'mid the assembled chiefs 275
 My tongue retracts not ; to the noblest Greek,
 Who since the fall of Troy demands a victim,
 To give the victim he demands, thy daughter.
 That state must fail, and many states have fallen,
 Where the brave soul, that harbours virtuous thought,
 Neglected like the vilest coward lies. 281
 Achilles, lady, by transcendent worth
 Merits our honours ; the illustrious chief,
 Who shed for Greece his dear blood in the dust.
 Shame were it then to use the hero's might 285
 While life inform'd him, and to slight him dead.
 Go to : should Greece again unite her powers,
 Should other wars call her brave sons to arms,
 Would they then fight, or choose ignoble ease,
 If he that falls in war unhonour'd lies ? 290
 For me, while life remains, let me receive
 Some slight reward, the slight reward contents :

But when I die, build me the lofty tomb,
 For great intent and honourable deed
 A monument to late posterity. 295

Thou wailest thy afflictions : but reflect,
 We have our aged matrons, hoary sires,
 And tender brides widow'd of noble husbands,
 Whose bones lie mouldering in the dust of Troy,
 That feel afflictions piercing as thy own : 300

Then bear them. If, in reverencing the dead,
 We judge amiss, our folly on our heads.
 Barbarians, you nor reverence your friends,
 Nor to the brave, that honourably died,
 Pay honours due. Hence conquest waits on Greece,
 And your ill counsels yield you like reward. 306

CHO. Ah me ! how wretched is the state of slaves,
 Compell'd by force to bear indignities !

HEC. In vain, my child, for thy dear life I plead ;
 My words are lost, and vanish in the air. 310

Thou mayst have more persuasion than thy mother.
 Like the sweet nightingale, whose plaintive notes
 Charm the dull ear of night, plead for thy life ;
 In all the eloquence of grief fall down,
 Embrace his knees : nor want'st thou argument ;
 He too hath children : move his pity to thee. 316

POL. I see, Ulysses, that thou hid'st thy hand
 Beneath thy robe, and turn'st thy face away,
 Inexorably bent on stern repulse.

My prayers, be confident, shall not assail thee. 320
 I follow thee : necessity requires it,

And death's my warm wish now : should I refuse,
 The too fond love of life would mark me base.

Why should I wish to live ? My morn of life
 Rose royally, a mighty monarch's daughter, 325
 Nurs'd in the lap of honourable Hope,

A bride for kings, who, with no common ardour
 Transported, sought to lead me to their thrones.

With lowly reverence the Trojan dames
 Beheld me, as the virgin train among 330
 I moved superior, like a goddess, save

Of mortal mould. But I am now a slave :
 That word, new to my ears, makes death my wish.
 Perchance some savage lord, whose gold might buy
 This wretched sister of the illustrious Hector, 335
 Might wear me down in household drudgery,
 Compell'd, or at the mill, or in the loom,
 To toil away the miserable day ;
 Then bid some paltry slave pollute my bed,
 To which contending monarchs late aspired. 340
 It shall not be : free leave I heaven's sweet light,
 And free present me to the shades below.
 Lead then, Ulysses, lead me to my death ;
 For now no ray of hope, no beam of thought
 Gives confidence of brighter days to come. 345
 And thou, afflicted parent, speak not, act not,
 To oppose my firm resolve ; but strengthen me
 To die, rather than bear dishonest wrong.
 When ills unwonted seize the fortunate,
 He bears them, but their hard yoke galls his neck :
 Happier in death ; for life, its honours lost, 351
 Becomes a burden most intolerable.

CHO. Strong is the mark, illustrious the high im-
 press
 Of noble birth, from great to greater still
 Advancing, when the dignity of virtue 355
 Reflects fresh lustre on nobility.

HEC. Honour is in thy words, but 'mid that honour,
 My child, dwells grief.—If you must gratify
 The son of Peleus, from yourselves to avert
 What might cause blame, slay not, ah ! slay not her :
 Lead me, Ulysses, to Achilles' tomb ; 361
 Strike, spare not : I brought Paris forth, whose hand
 Wing'd the barb'd shaft which pierced this son of
 Thetis.

ULYS. Not thee, the hero's shade demands not
 thee ;
 But her must Greece present the destined victim.

HEC. Yet slay me with my child, and pour my
 blood 366

With hers, a double offering to the Earth,
And him, the mighty dead, who calls for blood.

ULYS. The virgin's death sufficeth: to enough
We add not more. Would Heaven hers might be
spared! 370

HEC. It is of strong necessity that I
Die with my child.

ULYS. What strong necessity?
I know no mighty lord's commanding power.

HEC. I'll clasper, as the ivy clasps the oak.

ULYS. Not so, if temperate prudence might advise.

HEC. Never, O never will I quit my child. 376

ULYS. Nor I, without the virgin leave this place.

POL. Mother, forbear: and thou, Laertes' son,
Be gentler to a parent rack'd with grief.
O thou unhappy, strive not with the strong. 380

Wouldst thou fall prostrate, harrow up the ground,
And rend thy aged limbs, unseemly dragg'd
By the rude violence of younger hands?

Ah, draw not on thee such indignities!

But, my loved mother, give me thy dear hand, 385

And to join cheek to cheek; for now no more,
No more shall I behold the sun's bright beams,
His orb no more: receive my last address:

To the dark mansions of the dead I go. 389

HEC. And I in heaven's fair light shall be a slave.

POL. Nor bridal bower nor nuptial torch awaits me.

HEC. Mournful thy state, but miserable mine.

POL. There far from thee in darkness shall I lie.

HEC. What shall I do, alas! where end my life?

POL. Born of free parents, I shall die a slave. 395

HEC. And I of fifty children am bereaved.

POL. To Hector what, and to thy aged husband
What message shall I bear?

HEC. That I'm most wretched.

POL. Alas, thou tenderest, kindest, best-loved pa-
rent!

HEC. Alas, my child's untimely, cruel fate! 400

POL. Mother, farewell: farewell, Cassandra too!

HEC. Fare others well; nothing is well to me.

POL. Farewell, my Polydore, in warlike Thrace!

HEC. If yet he lives: I doubt—so wretched all.

POL. He lives, and lives to close thy dying eyes.

HEC. I die before my death beneath my ills. 406

POL. Lead me, Ulysses; but first veil my head.

My heart melts in me at my mother's griefs,

And, ere I die, my wailings melt her heart.

O light! for yet I may express thy name, 410

Our commerce is no more, save the short space

The sword waits for me at Achilles' tomb.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

HEC. Ah me! I faint: my limbs no more support
me.

My daughter, do but touch me; stretch thy hand,

Give it me: do not leave me childless thus. 415

Lost, irrecoverably lost, undone!—

Would I might see the Spartan Helen thus;

For her bright eyes brought all these ills on Troy.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Tell me, ye gales, ye rising gales,
That lightly sweep along the azure plain, 420

Whose soft breath fills the swelling sails,

And waft the vessel dancing o'er the main;

Whither, ah! whither will ye bear

This sickening daughter of despair?

What proud lord's rigour shall the slave deplore 425

On Doric or on Phthian shore;

Where the rich father of translucent floods,

Apidanus, pours his headlong waves,

Through sunny plains, through darksome woods;

And with his copious stream the fertile valleys laves?

ANTISTROPHE I.

Or shall the wave-impelling oar 431

Bear to the hallow'd isle my frantic woes,

Beneath whose base the billows roar,

And my hard house of bondage round enclose?

Where the new palm, the laurel where, 435
 Shot their first branches to the air,
 Spread their green honours o'er Latona's head,
 And interwove their sacred shade.
 There, 'mid the Delian nymphs, awake the lyre ;
 To Dian sound the solemn strain, 440
 Her tresses bound in golden wire,
 Queen of the silver bow, and goddess of the plain.

STROPHE II.

Or where the Athenian towers arise,
 Shall these hands weave the woof, whose radiant
 glow
 Rivals the flower-impurpled dies 445
 That on the bosom of the young spring blow ;
 And on the gorgeous pall present
 Some high and solemn argument ;
 Yoke the proud coursers to Minerva's car,
 And whirl her through the walks of war ; 450
 Or 'gainst the 'Titans arm'd let thundering Jove,
 In all heaven's awful majesty,
 Hurl hideous ruin from above,
 Roll his tempestuous flames, and vindicate his sky ?

ANTISTROPHE II.

Alas, my children, battle slain ! 455
 Alas, my parents ! Let me drop the tear,
 And raise the mournful, plaintive strain,
 Your loss lamenting and misfortune drear.
 Thee chief, imperial Troy, thy state
 I mourn deserted, desolate ; 460
 Thy walls, thy bulwarks smoking on the ground,
 The sword of Greece triumphant round ;
 I, far from Asia, o'er the wide sea born,
 In some strange land am call'd a slave,
 Outcast to insolence and scorn, 465
 And for my nuptial bed find a detested grave.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS.

TAL. Tell me, ye Trojan dames, where shall I find
 The afflicted matron, late the queen of Troy ?

CHO. Near thee, Talthybius, on the ground she lies,
In her robes muffled.

TAL. O supreme of heaven, 470
What shall we say? That thy firm providence
Regards mankind? or vain the thoughts which deem
That the just gods are rulers in the sky,
Since tyrant Fortune lords it o'er the world?
Was not she queen of Phrygia rich in gold? 475
Was not she wife of Priam bless'd with power?
But now her vanquished empire is no more;
Herself a slave, old, childless, on the ground
She lies, and soils her hoar head in the dust.
Alas, the change I too am old: be death 480
My portion, ere I sink to that low fortune.—
Rise, thou afflicted; stand on thy feet; hold up
Thy reverend head.

HEC. Disturb me not: who art thou,
That wilt not let my sorrows lie on the earth?
Why dost thou raise me, whosoe'er thou art? 485

TAL. I am Talthybius, herald of the Greeks,
By Agamemnon, lady, sent for thee.

HEC. O, welcome, welcome! have the Greeks de-
creed
To slay me also at the tomb? These tidings
Are full of joy: haste, quick, lead me, old man. 490

TAL. That thy dead daughter, lady, in the earth
Thou mayst entomb, attending thee I come,
Sent by the sons of Atreus, and the host.

HEC. Alas, what wilt thou say? Comest thou not
then
Charged with my death, but with this bitter mes-
sage? 495

Torn from thy mother, art thou dead, my child?
Am I bereaved of thee? Ah, wretched me!
But were ye gentle in your butchery,
Or did stern rigour steel your hostile hearts?
Tell me, old man; no pleasing tale at best. 500

TAL. Twice, lady, shall I wipe the tearful eye
In pity of thy daughter: when she died,

The warm drop fell ; now shall it fall again,
 As I relate each mournful circumstance.
 The assembled host of Greece before the tomb 505
 Stood in full ranks at this sad sacrifice :
 Achilles' son, holding the virgin's hand,
 On the mound's extreme summit ; near him I ;
 An honourable train of chosen youths,
 In readiness her strugglings to restrain, 510
 Follow'd : the golden goblet crown'd with wine
 The hero's son then took, and with his hand
 Pour'd the libation to his father's shade
 At his high bidding, I aloud proclaim'd
 Silence through all the host : and all were silent.
 Then he :—" O son of Peleus ! O my father ! 516
 Accept my offerings, which evoke, which sooth
 The dead : O, come, drink the pure purple stream,
 Which from this virgin we present to thee.
 Loose all our cables, wing our flying sails, 520
 Propitious give us to return from Troy,
 And safe revisit our paternal Greece."
 He spoke, and with him all the people pray'd.
 Then, taking by the hilt his golden sword,
 He drew it from the scabbard : at his nod 525
 The noble youths advanced to hold the virgin ;
 Which she perceiving, with these words address'd
 them :—
 " Ye Greeks, beneath whose arms my country fell,
 Willing I die : let no hand touch me : boldly
 To the uplifted sword I hold my neck. 530
 You give me to the gods : then give me free ;
 Free let me die ; nor let a royal maid
 Blush 'mong the dead to hear the name of slave."
 Loud was the applause : the royal Agamemnon
 Commands that none should touch her : at the voice
 Of their great chief the obedient youths retire. 536
 Soon as she heard the imperial word, she took
 Her robe, and from her shoulder rent it down,
 And bared her bosom, bared her polish'd breast,
 Beauteous beyond the sculptor's nicest art : 540

Then, bending to the earth her knee, she spoke
 Words, the most mournful sure that ear e'er heard:—
 "If 'tis thy will, young man, to strike this bosom,
 Strike: or my throat dost thou require? behold,
 Stretch'd to thy sword, my throat." Awhile he
 paused, 545

In pity of the virgin; then reluctant
 Deep in her bosom plunged the fatal steel.
 Her life-blood gush'd in streams: yet, ev'n in death
 Studious of modesty, composed she fell,
 And cover'd with her robe her decent limbs. 550

Soon as the vital spirit through the wound
 Expired, in various toils the Greeks engaged:
 Some on the breathless body scattered boughs;
 Some, bringing unctuous pines, the solemn pyre
 Funereal raised: was one remiss, the active 555
 Rebuked him thus:—"Dost thou stand idle here,
 Thou drone? Hast thou no robe, no ornament,
 Nothing to grace this high heroic spirit,
 This glorious excellence?" Thus they their zeal
 With generous ardour to the dead express'd. 560

But thee, blest parent of the noblest offspring,
 Happiest of women, now I see most wretched.

CHO. Such ruin o'er my country, and the house
 Of Priam, swells: so will the rigorous gods.

HEC. O my poor child! Which first shall I be-
 wail 565

'Mid this immensity of ills? If one
 Engage my thoughts, another rushes on,
 Bringing distraction: sorrow throngs on sorrow,
 And misery to misery succeeds.
 But now the memory of thy cruel fate 570
 From my sad heart shall never be erased.
 Yet this alleviates; nobly didst thou die.
 If, favour'd by the heavens, the unfertile soil
 Teems with the golden grain, and if the fertile,

553 This was in imitation of the honours paid by the specta-
 tors to the conquerors in the Olympic and Pythian games.

Robb'd of due culture, brings forth naught but weeds,
 We wonder not: with man it is not so; 576
 The bad can never be but bad, the good
 But good; uninjured by calamity,
 His nature braves the storm, and is good always.
 But whence this difference? From the parents is it,
 Or from instruction? In the school of honour 581
 Is virtue learn'd; and he that's nurtured there
 Knows, by the law of honour, what is base.
 But all in vain I bolt my sentences.
 Go thou, require the Grecians not to touch 585
 My daughter; no; but keep the rabble from her:
 In a large army some are riotous;
 Like wildfire runs the sailor's insolence,
 And not to be flagitious is a crime.
 And thou, my old attendant, take thy urn, 590
 Dip in the sea, and bring the briny wave,
 That with the last ablutions I may bathe her,
 Not for the bridal bed, but for the tomb.
 But I will grace her obsequies with all
 The honours she deserves: ah, whence? I have not
 Wherewith to grace them: as I may then: what, 596
 What shall I do? From the poor captive dames,
 That sit around me in yon lordly tents,
 I will collect what little ornaments
 Each from her former house hath snatched by
 stealth, 600
 And kept by these new masters unobserved.
 Ye faded splendours of my house! O house
 Once fortunate! O Priam! on whose state
 Magnific wealth attended, in thy children
 Supremely bless'd, I too was bless'd in them, 605
 How are we fallen, from all our greatness fallen,
 All our proud glories! Yet in these we boast,
 Our gorgeous palaces, and titled honours.
 All these are nothing but high-sounding words,
 And polished perturbation. Happiest he, 610
 Whose humble state misfortune never knew.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Dreadful Discord first arose,
 Leading dangers, leading woes ;
 Destruction joined the train,
 When in Ida's forests hoar 615
 Paris hew'd the venturous oar,
 And dash'd it in the main :
 In gallant trim the vessel cuts its way,
 And wafts the wanton boy to Helen's arms ;
 In his wide course yon radiant orb of day 620
 Ne'er with his golden beams illumined brighter
 charms.

ANTISTROPHE.

Toil on toil, a hideous band !
 Ruthless Ruin's iron hand,
 Vindictive close us round.
 Simois, o'er thy verdant meads, 625
 Desolation frowning treads,
 And blasts the goodly ground :
 E'er since the Phrygian shepherd, blind to fate,
 'Mid the contending beauties of the skies,
 Adjudged the palm, inexorable hate, 630
 And war, and death, and havoc round us rise.

EPODE.

Nor on Simois' banks alone
 Sighs the sad and plaintive moan,
 Or Ilion's wasted plain :
 Nigh Eurotas' silver tide 635
 Many a tear the Spartan bride
 Pours for her lover slain :
 There for her children, lost in wild despair,
 The frantic mother bids her sorrows flow ;
 Rends from her reverend head her hoary hair, 640
 And tears her bleeding cheeks in agonies of wo.

FEMALE ATTENDANT, CHORUS, HECUBA.

ATT. Daughters of Troy, say, where is Hecuba,
 EURIP. VOL. III.—C

Who in the dreadful combat of affliction
 Unmatch'd surpasses all of human race ?
 That crown nor man nor woman bears from her. 645

CHO. What new misfortune jars upon thy tongue,
 That thy discordant clamours never sleep ?

ATT. To Hecuba I bring this grief : in ills,
 The voice of wo is harsh, untunable.

CHO. See, opportunely from yon tents she comes.

ATT. O my unhappy mistress, more unhappy 651
 Than words can utter ! Ruin comes on thee,
 Quenching the light of life : a queen no more,
 A wife no more, a mother now no more !

HEC. There needs not thy rude voice to tell us
 this. 655

But what ! bringest thou here the lifeless corse
 Of my Polyxena, whose funeral rites
 Greece with united zeal prepares to grace ?

ATT. Ah, she knows nothing ; but, lamenting still
 Polyxena, suspects not this new loss. 660

HEC. O my unhappy fate ! Dost thou then bring
 The heaven-inspired Cassandra's sacred head ?

ATT. Thou speakest of the living ; but the dead
 Demands the sigh : behold the corse uncover'd,
 A sight to raise astonishment and horror. 665

HEC. Ah me ! it is my son, my Polydore,
 And dead, whom safe beneath the Thracian's roof
 I fondly deem'd. Now I am lost indeed,
 In total ruin sunk. My son ! my son !

O wo, wo, wo ! Affliction's cruel power 670
 Teaches my voice the frantic notes of madness.

ATT. Knowest thou aught then touching thy son's
 death ?

HEC. Strange, inconceivable to thought, I see
 Horrors on horrors, woes on woes arise.
 Never, henceforth, ah, never shall I know 675
 A day without a tear, without a groan.

CHO. Dreadful, O dreadful are the ills we suffer.

HEC. Alas, my son, son of a wretched mother,
 What hard mishap hath robb'd thee of thy life ?

What fate, what hand accursed hath wrought thy death? 680

ATT. I know not; on the wave-wash'd strand I found him.

HEC. Cast up, or fallen beneath the bloody spear?

ATT. Cast on the smooth sand by the surging wave.

HEC. Ah me! now know I what my dream forebodes:

The black-wing'd phantom pass'd me not; the vision Show'd to my sleeping fancy's frighted eye 686

My son no longer in the light of life.

CHO. These visions, teach they who hath slain thy son?

HEC. He, our false friend, who spurs the Thracian steed,

To whom his father for protection sent him. 690

CHO. Ah me!—what! slew him to possess his gold?

HEC. Unutterable deeds, abominable, Astonishing, unholy, horrible!

Where are the laws of hospitality?

Tyrant accursed, how hast thou gored his body, 695

Gash'd with the cruel sword his youthful limbs,

And steel'd thy heart against the sense of pity!

CHO. Never on mortal head did angry Heaven Pour such a storm of miseries, as on thine.

But Agamemnon I behold, our lord, 700

Advance this way: let us be silent, friends.

AGAMEMNON, HECUBA, CHORUS.

AGA. Why, Hecuba, dost thou delay to come, And place thy daughter in the tomb? For since

Talthybius told us not to touch the virgin,

The sons of Greece forbear, and touch her not. 706

I marvel at thy stay, and come to seek thee.

Well is each mournful honour there prepared,

If in such mournful honours aught be well.—

But, ah! what lifeless corse before the tents

Behold I here! Some Trojan: for the robes, 710
That clothe the limbs, inform me 'tis no Grecian.

HEC. Unhappy son! But, naming thee unhappy,
[*apart*

I name myself. Alas! what shall I do?
Shall I fall down at Agamemnon's knees,
Or bear in silence my calamities? 715

AGA. Why thus lamenting dost thou turn from me?
What hath been done? tell me: what body this?

HEC. But should he treat me as a slave, a foe,
[*apart*

And spurn me, I should add to my afflictions.

AGA. Not mine the spirit of prophecy, untaught
To trace the silent workings of thy mind. 721

HEC. Rather misdeem I not his thoughts un-
friendly, [*apart*

Who harbours not to me unfriendly thought?

AGA. Hast thou a wish I should not know these
things?

Be satisfied; I have no wish to know them. 725

HEC. Without him I cannot revenge my children:
Why then deliberate? I must be bold, [*apart*
Whether success attends me, or repulse.—

O royal Agamemnon, at thy knees

Suppliant I fall, and grasp thy conquering hand. 730

AGA. What thy request? If freedom to thine age,
That grace without reluctance may be granted.

HEC. Not freedom, but revenge; revenge on base-
ness:

Grant me revenge, and let me die a slave.

AGA. In what high charge wouldst thou engage my
aid? 735

HEC. In nothing that thy thoughts suggest, O
king.

Seest thou this corse, o'er which I drop the tear?

AGA. I see it; nor from thence thy purport learn.

HEC. He was my son.

AGA. Thy son, unhappy lady?

HEC. But not of those who died when Ilium fell.

AGA. Hadst thou another, lady, those beside? 741

HEC. I had; but what avail'd it? him thou seest.

AGA. Where, when the city fell, chanced he to be?

HEC. His father's tender fears sent him from Troy.

AGA. Whither, he only of thy sons removed? 745

HEC. To this land, where his breathless corse was found.

AGA. Sent to the king, to Polymestor sent?

HEC. And sent with treasures of destructive gold.

AGA. By whom then dead, or by what cruel fate?

HEC. By whom, but this inhospitable Thracian? 750

AGA. Inhuman, all on fire to seize the gold!

HEC. Ev'n so, soon as he knew our ruin'd state.

AGA. Where didst thou find the body, or who brought it?

HEC. She found him lying on the sea-beat shore.

AGA. By search discover'd, or by accident? 755

HEC. Charged with the laver for Polyxena.

AGA. By his protector murder'd and cast out?

HEC. Thus gash'd, and thrown to float upon the wave.

AGA. Unhappy thou, unbounded are thy woes!

HEC. All woes are mine: affliction hath no more.

AGA. Alas! was ever woman born so wretched! 761

HEC. Never, indeed, not Misery herself.

But for what cause thus at thy knees I fall,

Now hear: if justly I endure these ills,

And such thy thought, patient I will endure them:

If not, avenge me of this impious man, 766

Who, of the gods above or gods beneath

Reckless, hath done a most unholy deed,

Oft at my hospitable board received,

And number'd 'mong the foremost of my friends:

Thus graced, with fell intent he slew my son; 771

Nor, when the deed was done, deign'd to entomb

The dead, but flung him weltering on the wave.

But we are slaves, but we perchance are weak;

Yet the bless'd gods are strong, the law is strong 775

Which rules ev'n them; for by the law we judge

That there are gods, and form our lives, the bounds
 Of justice and injustice mark'd distinct.
 This law looks up to thee: if disregarded,
 If he escapes its vengeance, whose bold hand 780
 Inhospitably stabs his guest, or dares
 Pollute the sacred ordinance of Heaven,
 There is no justice in the affairs of men.
 Deem these deeds base, then, reverence my woes,
 Have pity on me, as a picture view 785
 The living portrait of my miseries.
 Erewhile I was a queen, but now thy slave;
 Erewhile bless'd in my children, childless now
 In my old age, abandon'd, outcast, wretched.
 Ah, whither dost thou turn thy backward step? 790
 Suing, shall I reap nothing but repulse?
 Why should poor mortals with incessant care
 Each unavailing science strive to attain,
 And slight, as nothing worth, divine Persuasion,
 Whose powerful charms command the hearts of men,
 And bend them unreluctant to her will? 796
 Who then may henceforth hope his state may
 flourish?
 Of all my sons (and who could boast such sons?)
 Not one is left; myself in bonds, and led
 To base and ignominious servitude, 800
 The smoke of Troy yet mounting to the skies.
 In vain perchance the argument of love
 Is urged; yet I will urge it: by thy side
 My daughter, the divine Cassandra, lies.
 For all thy nights of love, thy fond embraces, 805
 Tell me, hath she no interest in thy heart,
 No recompense; and I, through her, no grace?
 From the sweet shades of night, friendly to love,
 And from love's joys, much grace is wont to spring.
 Now hear me, king: seest thou this breathless body?
 A favour there is by affinity, 811
 A favour to thy love.—Yet one thing more.
 O, that by some nice art, or by some god,
 My arms, my hands, my hair, my feet had voice;

That each part, vocal with united prayers, 815
 Might supplicate, implore, importune thee!
 Imperial lord, illustrious light of Greece,
 Let me prevail: give me thine hand; avenge me!
 A wretch indeed, an outcast; yet avenge me!
 The cause of justice is the good man's care, 820
 And always to requite the villain's deeds.

CHO. How wonderful the events of human life,
 Its laws determined by necessity;
 Changing the sternest foe to a kind friend,
 And the kind friend to a malignant foe! 825

AGA. Thee, Hecuba, thy son, and thy misfortunes
 I pity, nor reject thy suppliant hand;
 And in the cause of justice and the gods,
 Wish to avenge thee on this impious Thracian;
 Could I appear studious of good to thee, 830
 Without surmise that for Cassandra's sake
 I let my vengeance loose, and crush the tyrant.
 Hence anxious fears rush thronging on my mind:
 This man the army deems a friend, the dead
 A foe: though dear to thee, yet this fond love 835
 Is private, to the troops no common care.
 Consider then; thou hast my will, my wish
 To favour thee, to yield thee ready aid,
 But slow, should Greece with taunting voice revile
 me.

HEC. Vain is the boast of liberty in man: 840
 A slave to fortune, or a slave to wealth,
 Or by the people or the laws restrain'd,
 He dares not act the dictates of his will
 But since too much thy fears incline to heed
 The multitude, I free thee from that fear. 845
 If with revenge this murderer I pursue,
 Not thy concurrence, but consent I ask.
 When the barbarian feels, what he shall feel,
 My vengeance,—should the Greeks tumultuous rise
 In aid, restrain them, nor appear to act 850
 As favouring me: what else the affair requires,
 Be confident, I well shall execute.

AGA. But how? What wilt thou do? Infirm with
age,

Grasp in thy hand the sword, and stab the tyrant?
Or work thy will with poisons? With what aid, 855
What hand? Or whence wilt thou procure thee
friends?

HEC. Within these tents are many Trojan dames.

AGA. The captives, say'st thou, prizes of the
Greeks?

HEC. With these will I revenge this bloody deed.

AGA. How shall weak women over men prevail?

HEC. Numbers are strong; add stratagem, resist-
less. 861

AGA. Yet like I not this female fellowship.

HEC. Were not Ægyptus' sons by women slain,

The men of Lemnos all extirpated?

But leave me to conduct this enterprise: 865

Only permit this female slave to pass

Safe through the army.—Go thou to the Thracian;

Tell him, that Hecuba, once queen of Troy,

On matters, that no less of good to him

Import than me, would see him and his sons: 870

It is of moment they should hear my words.—

Awhile, O king! the mournful rites forbear

For my Polyxena, my late slain daughter;

That on one pile the brother and the sister,

To me a double grief, may blaze together, 875

And mix their ashes in one common grave.

AGA. Then be it so; for could the army sail,

My power could not indulge thy fond request:

But since the god breathes not the favouring gales,

We must perforce await a prosperous voyage. 880

Success attend thee! for the general good

Of individuals and of states requires

That vengeance overtake the unrighteous deed,

And Virtue triumph in her just reward.

HECUBA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

No more, imperial Troy, no more 885
 Shall Fame exalt thy matchless power,
 And hail thy rampired height.
 From Greece the frowning tempest came,
 And, arm'd with war's destructive flame,
 Roll'd its tremendous might. 890
 Thy regal head with turrets crown'd,
 Rest of its honours, on the ground
 Lies low ; and smoke and gore distain
 The blasted glories of thy golden reign.

ANTISTROPHE I.

It was the still, the midnight hour, 895
 Embalm'd with sweet sleep's lenient power,
 When Ruin urged its way :
 From jocund song and mirthful feast,
 On my chaste bed retired to rest,
 My lord, my husband lay : 900
 Secure of war, high hung his spear,
 Nor did his thoughts suggest a fear,
 That the proud foe, fierce to destroy,
 Insulting trod the streets of vanquish'd Troy.

STROPHE II.

Before the mirror's golden round 905
 Curious my braided hair I bound,
 Adjusted for the night ;
 And now, disrobed, for rest prepared :
 Sudden tumultuous cries are heard,
 And shrieks of wild affright : 910
 Grecians to Grecians shouting call,
 " Now let the haughty city fall ;
 In dust her towers, her rampires lay,
 And bear triumphant her rich spoils away."

ANTISTROPHE II.

In one slight robe my nuptial bed, 915
 Loose as a Spartan maid, I fled,
 And sought Diana's shrine.

And on my way met this thy messenger :
Why sent, from thy own mouth I wish to learn.

HEC. Confounded in thy presence, and abash'd,
I stand, O king, sunk to this abject state. 955

Thus to appear before thee, who hast seen
My greatness, to appear degraded, fallen
Thus low, with shame o'erwhelms me, to the ground
Fixes my eyes, that dare not look on thee,
Dare not behold thy face : impute not this 960

To hate of thee, but to that grave reserve,
That female modesty, whose decent laws
Allow us not the free view of your sex.

POL. No marvel. But in what dost thou require
My aid? Or wherefore hast thou sent to call me?

HEC. Something in private, that concerns my-
self, 966

To thee and to thy sons I wish to impart.
Bid thine attendants from these tents retire.

POL. Retire : this solitude assures me safe.
Friendly to us art thou, friendly to me 970

The Grecian troops. Now say wherein my power
To thy unhappy state may minister
Relief or ease : warm is my wish to serve thee.

HEC. But tell me first, my son, my Polydore,
Committed by his father's hand and mine 975
To thee and thy good faith, is he alive?

POL. In him at least is fortune kind to thee.

HEC. Honour is in thy words, worthy thyself.

POL. Is there aught else which thou wouldst wish
to know?

HEC. And doth my child remember his poor
mother? 980

POL. He doth, and wish'd to come in secret to
thee.

HEC. Is the gold safe, which he from Troy brought
with him?

POL. Safe is the treasure, in my house preserved.

HEC. Preserve it, then, nor covet the rich prize.

POL. That be far from me, in my own wealth
bless'd. 985

HEC. Know'st thou what I would tell thee and thy sons ?

POL. I know not, till thy words declare it to me.

HEC. Be my son loved as thou art loved by me.

POL. What is it that my sons and I must know ?

HEC. The old buried treasures of the house of Priam. 990

POL. Is it thy wish to inform thy son of these ?

HEC. It is, through thee ; for sacred is thy faith.

POL. But why the presence of my sons required ?

HEC. Better, lest death prevent thee, they should know it.

POL. Well hast thou said, and with more wisdom judged. 995

HEC. Remember'st thou in Troy Minerva's fane ?

POL. Is the gold there ? What sign directs the search ?

HEC. A black stone rises high, and marks the place.

POL. Touching things there hast thou aught else to tell me ?

HEC. To guard the treasures, which I brought with me. 1000

POL. Where these ? within thy robes ? or how conceal'd ?

HEC. Within these tents, amid the heaps and spoils.

POL. What, in these tents, the Grecians' naval camp ?

HEC. The captive dames of Troy have tents apart.

POL. But are they safe ? Is there no soldier in them ? 1005

HEC. None, not a single Greek, but we alone.

While they with eager haste unfurl their sails,
And every anxious thought is bent on Greece,
Enter ; that, having done what need requires,
Thou mayst again return with these thy sons, 1010
Where thou hast hospitably lodged my son.

SEM. Not yet, thou hast not yet received thy
meed;
But with tempestuous speed
Shall vengeance roll thee in the gulf profound,
The hoarse waves roaring round; 1015
Fill thy sad soul with wild affright,
Then plunge thee in eternal night.
This, Justice, is thy stern decree,
And never shall the destined head go free.
Dreadful, dreadful ills await; 1020
Bright Hope smiling smoothes thy way,
But fallacious leads to fate,
And leaves thy life to unwarlike hands a prey.

POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, SEMICHORUS.

POL. O hideous! dark, deprived of sight, blind,
blind! [within.
SEM. Heard ye the clamours of the Thracian,
friends? 1025
POL. My sons, O horror! they have slain my sons.
SEM. Some dreadful deed is done within the tent.
POL. With all your swiftness you shall not
escape:
I'll dash the tent down, crush you in your holes.
SEM. See, what a weight his strong hand heaves
to throw! 1030
Shall we rush on him, since the occasion calls us,
To succour Hecuba, and aid our friends?
HEC. Dash it to pieces, spare not, rend the doors:
[coming forth.
Yet shalt thou not replace light in thine eyes,
Nor see thy sons alive, whom I have slain. 1035
SEM. Hast thou surprised, hast thou o'erpower'd
the Thracian?
Say, lady, hast thou done the appointed deed?
HEC. Soon shalt thou see him here before the tent;
Blind, with blind steps wheeling his oblique path.
His sons are slain, both slain, the Trojan dames 1040
Assisting my revenge, which now he feels.
EURIP. VOL. III.—D

See, he advances: distant I withdraw,
Shunning the violence of his boisterous rage.

POL. O horrible! [coming forth.

Where shall I go? where stand? where steer my
way? 1045

Prone, like a mountain beast, shall my hands learn
The task of feet? Is this my course, or this,
That I may seize these murderous dames of Troy,
Who thus have ruin'd me? Pernicious fiends,
Ye Phrygians, curses on you! in what hole 1050
Hide ye your trembling heads? O sun, couldst thou
Heal these dark, bleeding orbs, relume their light!—
Hist! hist! I hear the soft tread of these women:
How then direct my steps to rush on them,
To tear the savages, to rend them piecemeal, 1055
And glut my vengeance for the wrongs they've done
me?

Ah, whither am I borne, leaving my sons
By these infernal furies to be torn,
And piecemeal on the mountains cast, to dogs,
To ravenous dogs, a mangled, bleeding prey? 1060
Where shall I stand? where turn? where point my
steps?

For, as a ship with all its cables loose,
Its sails all streaming to the wind, I drive,
To guard my sons to that destructive place, 1064
Where murder'd on the ensanguined ground they lie.

CHO. Wretch! what a load of misery on thee lies,
Thy deeds of baseness by the avenging gods
With deeds of horror on thy head repaid!

POL. What, ho! my Thracians, ho! To arms,
my friends,

Bestride your fiery steeds, couch your strong spears;
Haste to my aid, ye valiant sons of Mars! 1071

Ye Grecians, ho! Ye sons of Atreus, ho!

Halloo! halloo! Again I call, halloo!

Quick, I conjure you by the gods, haste, come.

Hear ye my voice? Comes no man to my aid? 1075

Why are you slow? These women have destroy'd
me,

These captive women. O, 'tis horrible,
 Horrible what I suffer! Ruin, ruin!
 Ah, which way shall I turn me? whither go?
 Shall I take wing, and with a lofty flight 1080
 Soar through the ethereal sky, to the high man-
 sions

Where Sirius and Orion from their eyes
 Flash the far-beaming blaze of fiery light?
 Or, plunging through the darksome depths of hell,
 Seek a sad refuge, a sad harbour there? 1085

CHO. When ills oppress beyond our power to bear,
 No wonder if we wish relief in death.

AGAMEMNON, POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS.

AGA. Whence this rude clamour, whose tumultu-
 ous noise
 Awakes the mountain echo, and disturbs 1089
 Our camp? But that we know the Phrygian towers
 Are fallen beneath the conquering arms of Greece,
 These hideous outcries might occasion fear.

POL. My royal friend, leader of Greece, I know
 thee,
 Hearing thy voice. Seest thou what I suffer? 1094
 AGA. Ah, wretched Polymestor, what rude hand
 Hath done this outrage? Who thus gored thine
 eyes,
 And quench'd their sightless orbs? Who slew thy
 sons?

Unbounded was his rage 'gainst thee and thine.

POL. This ruin, more than ruin, falls on me
 From Hecuba, and Phrygia's female slaves. 1100

AGA. What say'st thou? Hecuba, hast thou done
 this?
 Hath thy bold hand dared this atrocious deed?

POL. Dost thou speak to her? Is she near me,
 then?

Tell me where; guide me to her, that my hands
 May seize, rend, mangle all her bleeding limbs. 1105

AGA. What meanest thou?

POL. Now, by the gods, I pray thee,
Let me but lay my raging hand upon her.

AGA. Forbear ; banish the savage from thy heart,
And calmly speak ; that, hearing thee and her,
I may judge justly why these ills befell thee. 1110

POL. Then let me speak. Of Priam's youngest
sons,

His son by Hecuba was Polydore.

Him to my charge his father sent from Troy,

Presaging from your arms his country's ruin.

I slew the boy : but for what cause I slew him, 1115

With what sage policy, what forecast, hear.

This youth, thy foe, might people 'Troy again

(Such were my fears), again might raise its walls ;

And should Greece know a son of Priam lived,

'Gainst Phrygia their confederate arms once more

Advancing, in their march these fields of 'Thrace

Might haply ravage ; and this region rue, 1122

As now, O king, the ill neighbourhood of 'Troy.

When her son's death was known to Hecuba,

With treacherous device she lured me hither, 1125

Feigning I know not what of buried gold,

Treasures concealed in 'Troy, the wealth of Priam ;

Then, with a specious face of secrecy,

Within the tent me only and my sons

Admits : I, careless, in the midst reclined : 1130

Around me, as a friend, familiar sat

Bevies of 'Trojan dames, and to the light

Held the rich texture of the Edonian loom,

Praising the curious tissue of my robes :

Others admiring view'd my 'Thracian spear ; 1135

So stripp'd me of my double ornament.

Such as were mothers seem'd with fond regard

To admire my sons, caress'd them, in their arms

Alternately received them, till from me 1139

They held them distant : 'mid their blandishments,

Suddenly from beneath their robes drew daggers,

And with them stab my sons : me others seize

With hostile violence, my hands, my feet

Lock'd in close grasp : if to protect my sons
 I raised my head, they held me by the hair ; 1145
 If I would move my hands, numbers hung on them,
 And kept me with their cumbrous weight confined.
 But their last mischief was a deed of horror
 Surpassing savage ; for they seize my eyes,
 Pierce these poor bleeding orbs, and quench their
 light, 1150

Then vanish through the tent : I started fierce,
 Like a chafed tiger, and these murderous hounds
 Pursue, along the walls searching my way,
 Battering and rending. Studious of thy favour,
 I suffer this, and having slain thy foe, 1155
 Imperial Agamemnon. To be brief,
 If any in past times with severe taunts
 Have censured women, if now any vents
 His obloquies, or shall hereafter vent,
 In one brief sentence I comprise the whole :— 1160
 It is a breed, not all the extended earth,
 Nor the sea's ample depths, produce the like :
 This truth he feels the most who knows them best.

CHO. Curb thy intemperate tongue, nor with rude
 speech

Without distinction thus revile the sex. 1165
 Some may be form'd by nature prone to ill,
 But many are illustrious for their virtues.

HEC. Leader of Greece, it ill becomes a man
 With pompous words to decorate his deeds :
 If he hath acted well, well let him speak ; 1170
 If ill, shame on his tongue ; nor let him clothe
 His base injustice in the garb of virtue.
 Yet these are arts, the versed in which are wise ;
 But in the end their wisdom fails, and leaves them
 To perish with inevitable ruin. 1175
 To thee this preface. Turn I now to him,
 To expose the false gloss of his arguments.
 Say'st thou, that from redoubled toil to save
 The Grecians, and for Agamemnon's sake,
 Thouslew'st my son ? Detested monster ! know 1180

This first, that Greece abhors, and must for ever
 Abhor, barbarians. Studious, thou say'st, of favour :
 What favour, that should prompt thy bloody hand ?
 Was some connubial league thy wish ? By blood
 Wast thou allied ? Or what cause canst thou plead ?
 Would they sail back and ravage the fair fields 1186
 Of flourishing Thrace ? Whom canst thou thus
 persuade ?

'Twas gold, wouldst thou speak truth, that slew my
 son,

Thy sordid love of lucre. Tell me else,
 While 'Troy yet flourished, while her rampired walls
 Defied the fierce assault, while Priam lived, 1191
 And Hector's strong hand grasp'd his dreaded
 spear,

Then, why not then, if studious of his favour,
 When in thy house my son was lodged, was cher-
 ish'd,

Didst thou not kill him, or to the Argive camp 1195
 Bear him alive ? But when our adverse fate
 Obscured our glory, and the ascending smoke
 Show'd thee that 'Troy was fallen beneath its foes,
 Then thy cursed hand inhospitably murder'd
 The stranger that sought refuge at thy hearth. 1200
 Nay, further hear me, that thy villanous mind
 May more appear ; if to the Greeks a friend,
 This gold, by thy confession his, not thine,
 Thou shouldst have borne a present to thy friends
 In want, and from their country long estranged. 1205
 But hast thou dared to let it from thine hand ?
 Is it not now, ev'n now, held in thy house ?
 Hadst thou protected, hadst thou saved my son,
 As honour dictates, great had been thy glory.
 In adverse hours the friendship of the good 1210
 Shines most ; each prosperous day commands its
 friends.

Or hadst thou wanted, and his fortune flourish'd,
 My son had been a mighty treasure to thee.
 But now no longer hast thou him a friend ;

Lost is the enjoyment of the gold, thy sons 1215
 Are lost, and on thy head these ills repaid
 I tell thee, therefore, shouldst thou favour him,
 Thou, Agamemnon, wilt appear unjust :
 Faith, Honour, Justice, Friendship, Sanctity,
 Which most we wish to serve, he hath profaned :
 Favour to such will show that villanies 1221
 Delight. But we shall not revile our lords.

CHO. See with what force a just cause always
 pleads,
 And pours the eloquent tide of words as just !

AGA. To me ungrateful is the task to judge 1225
 A stranger's ill deeds ; but necessity
 Constrains me : for to engage, then to abandon
 An office unperform'd, I deem a shame.

Know, then, that not to me, nor to the Grecians,
 Think I this bloody deed design'd a favour. 1230

To seize his gold thou didst it, and now seekest,
 In thy distress, to mould some fair pretext.

Trivial to you the murder of a guest

May be ; we Grecians start with horror back

At such a deed of baseness : can I then 1235

Without reproach acquit thee of injustice ?

It may not be. Since thou hast dared to do

Dishonourable deeds, the unwelcome bear.

POL. What ! from these wretches shall I suffer
 thus,

Defeated by a woman and a slave ? 1240

HEC. Thy acts of baseness Justice thus repays.

POL. Ah, wretch ! My sons, my sons ! O, my
 lost sight !

HEC. And dost thou feel it, savage ? Yet thou
 thoughtest

I had no feeling for my slaughter'd son.

POL. Dost thou exult in mischiefs thou hast
 wrought ? 1245

HEC. Avenged on thee, how can I but exult ?

POL. Not so, when soon thee shall the briny
 wave—

HEC. What! will he steer me to the Grecian coast?

POL. Close, eddying round thee from the high mast fallen.

HEC. What violence shall urge this desperate leap? 1250

POL. Spontaneous shalt thou climb its utmost height.

HEC. How climb, unless on rapid wings upborne?

POL. Changed to a dog, thy fierce eyes glaring fire.

HEC. Of this my change from whence art thou inform'd?

POL. The oracle of Thrace foretold us this. 1255

HEC. The ills thou sufferest did it not foretell?

POL. I had not by thy wiles been then ensnared.

HEC. In life or death shall I fulfil this fate?

POL. In death, and on thy tomb thy name survive.

HEC. How? from my change derived? Be less abstruse. 1260

POL. From thence derived, a mark to mariners.

HEC. It moves me not, since thus avenged on thee.

POL. Cassandra too, thy daughter, she must die,—

HEC. Thy prophecies on thy head! My soul disdains them.

POL. Slain by his wife, stern guardian of her house. 1265

HEC. Daughter of Tyndarus, not such her rage.

POL. She wields the axe, the slaughter'd husband falls.

AGA. Dost thou not rave, and covet further ills?

POL. Kill me; the bloody bath at Argos waits thee.

AGA. Hence with him, slaves, far hence; force him away. 1270

POL. What! art thou gall'd to hear it?

AGA. Stop his mouth.

POL. Stop it; the word is spoke.

HELENA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HELENA.

TEUCER.

MENELAUS.

THEONOE.

THEOCLYMENUS.

MESSENGERS.

ATTENDANTS.

CASTOR and POLLUX.

CHORUS of Grecian virgins.

HELENA.

ARGUMENT.

THE celebrated Helena, whose fatal beauty and disloyalty to her husband occasioned the destruction of Troy, and a long series of calamities to Greece, is here represented as an innocent and injured woman; a faithful, affectionate, and generous wife. To accomplish this object, the poet represents Paris to have been deceived by a phantom, while the true Helena was placed under the protection of Proteus, King of Egypt, during the siege of Troy. After the death of her guardian the lady is exposed to the solicitations of his son Theoclymenus, who proposes to make her his wife; she, however, perseveres in her unwavering attachment to Menelaus, who opportunely arrives in disguise, and is recognised by his wife, whose innocence is at length fully established. The reconciled pair now devise means of escape, which is accomplished by the aid of Theonoe, the daughter of Proteus, who is in danger of being put to death by her infuriated brother; when Castor and Pollux appear, and by their intervention save her life, and appease the anger of the monarch.—[The scene is in the island of Pharos, beside the tomb of Proteus, and before the palace of Theoclymenus.]

HELENA.

THese are the streams of Nile, the joy of nymphs
Glowing with beauty's radiance; he his floods,

2 Anaxagorus ascribed the swelling of the Nile to the melting of the snow in Ethiopia; which opinion his scholar Euripides followed.

EURIP. VOL III —E

Swell'd with the melted snow, o'er Egypt's plain
 Irriguous pours, to fertilize her fields,
 The ethereal rain supplying. Of these realms 5
 Proteus was lord, and, while he lived, his seat
 Fix'd in the isle of Pharos, and was king
 Of Egypt. Of the Nereid train a nymph
 He wedded, Psamathe, before betrothed
 To Æolus: by her he had a son 10
 Named Theoclymenus, for that his life
 He pass'd the gods revering: and his bed
 Was with one daughter bless'd, of form divine,
 Her mother's pride, and in her infant age
 Eidothea named; but when advancing years 15
 Matured her wisdom, she by all is call'd
 Theonoe, for things divine she knew,
 Present and future: this enlightening grace
 From Nereus she received, her mother's sire:
 But I from Sparta draw my birth, a realm 20
 To glory not unknown, of royal race,
 Daughter of Tyndarus: but fame reports
 That Jove, the silver plumage of a swan
 Assuming, to my mother Leda's breast,
 To effect his fraudulent purpose, wing'd his flight 25
 From the pursuing eagle, if in this
 Report speaks truth, and Helena my name.
 The ills which I have suffer'd, let me speak.
 Three rival goddesses to Paris came
 Amid the umbrageous groves of Ida, Juno, 30
 And Venus, and the virgin sprung from Jove,

7 "Against the city (Alexandria) stands the island of Pharos, which was joined to the continent by a bridge; in a promontory thereof, on a rock environed by the sea, Philadelphus caused a tower to be built of a wonderful height; ascended by degrees, and having many lanterns at the top, wherein lights burned nightly for a direction to such as sailed by sea: for the coasts upon both sides, being rocky, low, and harbourless, could not otherwise be approached without imminent danger. This had the repute of the world's seventh wonder, named after the name of the island. At this day, a general name for such as serve to that purpose."—*Sandys*.

Willing his judgment should decide the prize
 Of beauteous form : but Venus to his arms
 My beauty (for what most is beauteous oft
 Is most unhappy) promised, and receives 35
 The prize. To Sparta from his pastoral huts
 The Mæan Paris came, as to obtain
 My bed ; but Juno, for her slighted form
 Indignant, frustrates his fond hope, and gives
 Not me, but what resembling me she framed, 40
 A breathing image of ethereal air,
 To royal Priam's son ; and me he deem'd
 (Delusive thought !) his prize, who ne'er was his.
 But from these ills the purposes of Jove
 Accomplish'd their event ; for 'twixt the realms 45
 Of Greece and wretched Phrygia wasteful war
 He kindled, of the numbers of mankind
 To ease the burden'd earth, and raise to fame
 The bravest of the Grecians. I was made,—
 Not I,—my name was made the prize of war 50
 'Twixt the contending spears of Troy and Greece.
 But me receiving in the air that wreathed
 Around me, in a cloud conceal'd (for Jove
 Was not regardless of me) to the house
 Of Proteus Hermes bore me, for he deem'd 55
 Of mortals him the justest, that the bed
 Of Menelaus unstain'd I might preserve ;
 And here I am : but my unhappy lord
 Chases the spoiler, and with troops in arms
 Vengeful advances to the towers of Troy ; 60
 And for my sake beside Scamander's streams
 Have many died ; and I, sustaining all
 The hateful charge, with curses on my head,
 Am deem'd a wanton, faithless to my lord,
 And to have kindled this great war for Greece. 65
 Why bear I then to live ? I heard the god
 Declaring that once more the illustrious realms
 Of Sparta I should visit, with my lord
 There to reside, this knowing, that to Troy
 I never came : such the prophetic word 70

Of Hermes, that no stain my bed receive.
 While Proteus view'd the beams of this bright sur,
 I from constraint was safe ; but when he lay
 In the dark tomb, the son of the deceased
 To wed me urges with impetuous warmth : 75
 But I, my former husband honouring,
 A suppliant at this tomb of Proteus fall
 That he would guard my bed ; that if through
 Greece
 I bear an infamous and hated name,
 My person here may not receive a stain. 80

TEUCER, HELENA.

TEU. Who is the lord of this strong-rampired
 house !
 It seems the stately residence of wealth :
 The cornice and the well-wrought battlements
 Denote a royal mansion.—O ye gods,
 What do mine eyes behold ! I see a form, 85
 The image of that hated, baleful wretch,
 Whose fatal charms on me, and all the Greeks,
 Brought ruin. May the gods (so much thy shape
 Resembles Helen) hate thee ! Were I not
 In a strange land, I with this well-aim'd stone 90
 Would crush thee for thy likeness to that pest,
 The Spartan born of Jove, that thou shouldst die.
 HEL. Why, unkind stranger, hold me in disdain ?
 Why hate me for the mischiefs wrought by her ?
 TEU. I have offended, lady, and given way, 95
 More than I ought, to anger ; for all Greece
 The Jove-born Helen in abhorrence holds :
 Let me obtain forgiveness for my words.
 HEL. Who art thou ? In this country whence ar-
 rived ?
 TEU. I, lady, of the unhappy Greeks am one. 100
 HEL. No marvel, then, if Helena thou hate.

77 Tombs, as well as altars, were held sacred ; and it was unlawful to take the suppliant from them by force.

But say, who art thou? whence? who gave thee birth?

TEU. My name is Teucer; Telamon my sire;
From sea-girt Salamis I drew my birth.

HEL. Why dost thou tread these cultured fields of Nile? 105

TEU. A wandering exile, from my country driven.

HEL. Unhappy must thou be: who drove thee out?

TEU. My father. Who should more have been a friend?

HEL. What cause? for misery attends the deed.

TEU. For that my brother, Ajax, died at Troy. 110

HEL. How died he? by thy sword deprived of life?

TEU. On his own sword he rush'd, and died self-slain.

HEL. Through madness? for naught else could urge such deed.

TEU. Achilles, son of Peleus, didst thou know?

HEL. A suitor once of Helena, they say. 115

TEU. His death a contest kindled for his arms.

HEL. And how to Ajax this the cause of ill?

TEU. Grieved that another gain'd the arms, he died.

HEL. Thee doth the infection of his sufferings reach?

TEU. That for his sake with him I did not die.

HEL. Stranger, to Troy's famed towers didst thou advance? 121

TEU. With Greece I storm'd them, and myself am fallen.

HEL. Is Troy then fallen, with hostile flames consumed?

TEU. That of her rampires not a trace remains.

HEL. Ill-fated Helena, Troy falls for thee. 125

TEU. And Greece too bleeds: such dreadful ills are wrought.

HEL. How long in ashes hath the city sunk?

TEU. Seven fruitful years have wellnigh roll'd
their course.

HEL. How long sat Greece before the walls of
Troy ?

TEU. The moon for ten long years increased and
waned. 130

HEL. Seized you amid the spoil the Spartan
dame ?

TEU. Her Menelaus dragg'd by the locks away.

HEL. Saw'st thou the wretch, or speak'st thou by
report ?

TEU. Plain as I see thee, lady, her I saw.

HEL. Take heed, lest some illusion from the
gods— 135

TEU. Of something else discourse ; of her no
more.

HEL. Are you of this opinion so assured ?

TEU. I saw her with these eyes, my mind now
sees her.

HEL. Return'd, is she with Menelaus at home ?

TEU. Neither at Argos, nor by Sparta's streams.

HEL. Ah, this is ill to whom thou speak'st the
ill. 141

TEU. He with his wife, so fame reports, is lost.

HEL. Sail'd you not all at the same time for
Greece ?

TEU. We did: but wide a storm dispersed the
fleet.

HEL. Driven o'er the billows of what swelling
deep ? 145

TEU. Passing the middle of the Ægean sea.

HEL. Knows none that safely Menelaus arrived ?

TEU. None: but through Greece report proclaims
his death.

HEL. Unhappy me ! But lives the Thestian dame ?

TEU. Of Leda is thy question ? She is dead. 150

HEL. With sorrow sunk for Helena's ill fame ?

TEU. Her noble hands the fatal noose prepared.

HEL. The sons of Tyndarus, are they alive ?

TEU. Dead, and not dead: of them are two reports.

HEL. Tell me the best. Ah me, what woes are mine! 155

TEU. Fame says that, stars resembling, they are gods.

HEL. This to the ear is grateful: what the other?

TEU. That, for their sister's infamy, they died
By their own hands. Of this enough; for twice
I would not sigh. But to this royal house 160

I come, the fate-foretelling nymph to see,
Theonoe: in this a stranger aid,
That from her voice oracular I may learn
To speed my flying sails across the main
To sea-girt Cyprus, where Apollo's voice, 165
Given from his shrine, commanded me to dwell,
Calling my city from the island's name,
In honour of my country, Salamis.

HEL. Thy sails with speed will find their easy course.

But leave this country, stranger; quickly fly, 170

Ere by the son of Proteus thou art seen,
The monarch of the land; for absent now
Against the bleeding savages he cheers
His dogs of chase; for he to death devotes
Each Grecian stranger whom he seizes here: 175

But for what cause inquire not thou; and I
Am silent: speaking, what should I avail thee?

TEU. I thank thee, lady, for thy courtesy;
And may the gods reward thee. Though thou
bearest

The form of Helena, thou hast a mind 180

Unlike: but may she perish, and ne'er reach
The fields through which Eurotas rolls his streams!
But blessings, lady, ever wait on thee.

HELENA, CHORUS.

HEL. To what a piteous state of mighty wo
Am I now sunk! To what desponding strain 185

Shall I attune my struggling griefs, and pour,
At each sad pause, the tear, the sigh, the groan ?

HELENA.

STROPHE I.

Ye earth-born virgins, spread the wing ;
Hither, ye sister sirens, fly ;
The Libyan reed, the sweet pipe bring, 190
Attuned to mournful melody ;
Tears to my streaming tears that well ;
And griefs to my impassion'd griefs that swell.
And thou, dread empress of the realms below,
Send notes attemper'd to my notes of wo, 195
To Death, to Death a dismal strain :
Such now my anguish'd soul will cheer.
That, pleased, in Pluto's dark domain,
The Pæan to the dead the dead may hear.

CHORUS.

ANTISTROPHE I

I chanced, the azure stream beside, 200
Along its verdant fringe of reeds,
To spread the rich vests' purple pride,
And o'er the grass-attired meads,
Warm'd by the bright sun's golden rays,
That with fresh grace their vermeil dies might
blaze : 205
There pity-moving sorrow reach'd my ear,
And every note breathed anguish and despair :
Such are the wailing Naiad's sighs,
When her lost love the nymph bemoans :
He roving o'er the mountains flies ; 210
Pan's cavern'd rocks re-echo to her groans.

188 It was not unusual to adorn the tombs of the dead with images of the sirens. Helena, standing at the tomb of Proteus, may be supposed to have these images before her eyes.

HELENA.

STROPHE II.

Virgins of Greece, borne thence a prey
 By the barbaric oar,
 One from Achaia to this shore
 Hath plough'd the watery way : 215

Griefs to my griefs, and tears to tears,
 He bears, ah me ! the stranger bears.
 Troy hath bow'd her tower'd head,
 Sunk beneath the hostile flame ;
 Many, many are the dead 220

For me, for me, and my destructive name.
 The fatal noose hath Leda tied ;
 Through grief at my disgrace, she died :
 While my loved lord the ocean braves,
 He sinks beneath the ruthless waves. 225

Low in the tomb is Castor laid,
 And my lost brother I deplore :
 Their country's double glory is no more ;
 Fallen, fallen, they sink among the dead.
 His fiery steed no more he reins ; 230

No more in youthful exercise
 Around the dusty course he flies,
 Or thunders o'er Eurota's sedgy plains.

CHORUS.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Ah, lady, what a life of woes
 Doth fate to thee assign ! 235

'Thine is the sigh, the tear is thine ;
 Thy life affliction knows,
 Thy hapless life, ev'n from the hour
 Thy mother felt Jove's fraudulent power :
 He, conspicuous to the sight, 240

Came a beauteous swan in show,
 Wheeling down the ethereal height,
 And o'er her bosom waved his wings of snow.

Is there an ill thou hast not known ?
 Is there a suffering not thine own ? 245
 Thy mother sinks beneath her fate ;
 No joys the sons of Jove await :
 Thine eyes thy country view no more.
 Through the wide world report hath spread
 That, honour'd lady, on a wanton bed 250
 'Thou revel'st on a foreign shore.
 Thy lord from life's lov'd light is torn ;
 His livid corse the wild waves beat :
 Thou shalt no more thy royal seat,
 No more Minerva's brazen dome adorn. 255

HELENA.

EPODE.

Was he some Phrygian swain,
 Or one that drew from Greece his line,
 Who hew'd at Troy the fatal pine,
 Whence Priam's son, with fate his foe,
 Built his tall vessel fraught with wo, 260
 Then launch'd it on the main ;
 And, plying his barbaric oar,
 By my unhappy beauty led,
 Ambitious to obtain my bed,
 Plough'd his bold way to Sparta's shore ? 265
 This, wily Venus, was thy dreadful deed,
 Devoting Greece and Troy to bleed.
 Ah me, the starting tear !
 But Juno from her golden throne
 Sent the wing'd son of Maia down ; 270
 Who, as I crop the blooming rose,
 And in my folded robe enclose,
 The grateful sweets to bear
 To Pallas in her brazen shrine,
 Me through the yielding air convey'd, 275
 And in this unblet country laid,
 A contest (such the will divine),

255 This temple was erected on the highest eminence in Sparta ; it was begun by Tyndarus ; the building was carried on by his sons, and afterward finished by the Lacedæmonians.

A fatal contest to destroy
 The unhappy sons of Greece and Troy ;
 While on the banks of Simois my name 280
 Is vainly sounded by malignant fame.

CHO. Great are, I know, thy sufferings: but to
 bear
 Patient and calm the necessary ills
 Of life, is now of highest import to thee.

HEL. To what a fate, loved virgins, am I yoked !
 Was not my birth a prodigy to men ? 286
 For never Grecian or barbaric dame
 From the white shell her young ones gave to
 light,

As Leda brought me forth, Fame says, to Jove.
 My life too is a prodigy, and all 290

The sufferings of my life ; from Juno some,
 Of some my beauty is the unhappy cause.
 O that, like some fair figure, which beneath
 The painter's pencil on the canvass glows,
 This beauty were erased, and I might take 295

A form less graceful, that each circumstance
 Of ill, which now attends me, might be sunk
 Deep in oblivion, and that Greece might hold
 What is not ill in memory, as she now
 Holds what is ill. He, whom the gods afflict, 300

His sad thoughts though a single suffering claims,
 Feels its weight heavy, yet perforce must bear it :
 But I with many sufferings am weigh'd down.
 First, though my life is pure from guilt, my
 name

Is infamous: this ill, the charge of crimes 305
 From which the soul is free, is more severe
 Than what from truth arises. Next, the gods
 Me from my country have removed, and placed
 'Mid barbarous manners, where, of friends de-
 prived,

I, from the free who draw my generous blood, 310
 Am made a slave ; for 'mong barbarians all

Are slaves, save one. The anchor which alone
 Sustain'd my fortunes, that in time my lord
 Would come and free me from these ills, is lost;
 For he is dead, he views this light no more. 315
 My mother too is dead, her murderer I;
 Wrong was the cause indeed, but mine the wrong.
 She, who was born the glory of my house,
 My daughter, wastes the bloom of youth away
 Unwedded; and the twin-born sons of Jove 320
 Are now no more. With miseries thus oppress'd,
 I in each circumstance of life am lost,
 But not in deed. This now remains, my last
 Of sufferings; to my country if once more
 I should return, they would confine me, close 325
 Imprison'd, thinking me that Helena
 Who came with Menelaus from conquer'd Troy.
 But were my husband living, I should soon,
 By symbols only to each other known,
 Be recognised: but now that cannot be, 330
 And never to me shall he safe return.
 Why longer live I then? To what a fate
 Am I reserved! Should I, in sad exchange
 Of present ills, these nuptials choosing, sit
 With a barbarian at a table piled 335
 With costly viands? When the wife endures
 The ungentle converse of a husband rude
 In manners, in his person rude, to die
 Were rather to be wish'd. But how to die,
 My honour not debased? The pendent cord 340
 Disgraces, ev'n in slaves it is deem'd base:
 But there is something noble by the sword
 To fall, though painful: but to quit this life
 Behooves me now, so deep am I ingulf'd
 In ills. To glorious fortune others rise 345
 By beauty, but my ruin it hath wrought.

CHO. Think not this stranger, queen, whoe'er he is,
 In all he told thee form'd his words to truth.

HEL. Yet clearly did he say my lord is dead.

CHO. Many reports by falsehood are devised. 350

HEL. And many by the light of truth are clear.

CHO. More to despond than hope thy soul is bent.

HEL. My apprehensions throw this terror round me.

CHO. Art thou with kindness in this house received?

HEL. All, save my violent wooer, are my friends.

CHO. Know'st thou what thou must do then
Quit this tomb. 356

HEL. To what doth thy discourse, thy counsel tend?

CHO. Enter this house, and her who all things knows,

The daughter of the Nereid, sea-born nymph,
Theoneo, consult, if yet thy lord 360

Lives, or hath left the light: of this inform'd,
Such as thy fortunes are, indulge thy joy
Or grief; for ere thou art of aught assured,
Why shouldst thou sink in sorrow? Be advised;
Go from this tomb, and with the virgin hold 365

Instructive converse; all things thou mayst know
From her, and in this house be taught the truth:
Why then look farther? Willingly thy steps
Shall I attend, and from the virgin hear
Her Heaven-taught answers. Thus a woman ought,
With friendly aid, to share a woman's cares. 371

HEL. Yes; your advice, dear virgins, I receive:
Enter then, enter; that within this house
All my distresses you, with me, may hear.

CHO. To one not faintly willing is thy call. 375

HEL. Ah me, the unhappy day! Ah wretched me!
What sad, what mournful tidings shall I hear!

CHO. Do not, dear lady, do not thus, in thought
Presaging ill, anticipate thy griefs.

HEL. What hath he suffer'd, my unhappy lord?
Sees he the light of heaven, yon golden sun 381
That rolls his radiant chariot, and the stars
Holding their nightly course, or with the dead
Hath he beneath the earth his gloomy fate?

Have laid the towers of Dardan Troy in dust,
And ruin'd, ah! have ruin'd bleeding Greece.

MENELAUS.

O Pelops, who the contest didst sustain
At Pisa once, victorious o'er the car
Of proud Cœnomaus by four coursers whirl'd, 420
Would thou hadst perish'd, when thy flesh was
carved

To feast the gods, and 'mong them left thy life,
Ere my sire Atreus drew this vital air,
Thy son, who by Aerope gave birth
To royal Agamemnon, and to me 425
His brother, Menelaus, a noble pair.

The greatest host that ever march'd in arms
(This without vaunting I may speak) he led,
Ploughing the watery way to Troy: his power
Force gain'd not, but the willing sons of Greece 430
Obey'd their chief. Of these I might recount

Some now no more, and some that from the sea
With joy escaped, and of the dead the names
Bear with them home. But on the swelling wave
Of the blue sea, ere since the towers of 'Troy 435
I levell'd with the ground, have I been toss'd

Unhappy; and, desirous to review
My native country, by the gods am deem'd
Unworthy of that grace. The dreary wilds
Of Libya, and inhospitable bays, 440

All have I pass'd; and when my bark approach'd
Nigh to my country, back the adverse winds
Impetuous drove it, and no favouring gale
Hath fill'd my sails to waft me home to Greece:
And now, unhappy, shipwreck'd, reft of friends, 445

I on this land am cast; against the rocks
Oft toss'd, my shatter'd galley is a wreck,
And of her well-compacted planks the keel
Alone remains, in which I reach'd the shore
By unexpected fortune, scarce escaped, 450
And with me Helena brought back from Troy.

But of this country what the name, and who
 The inhabitants, I know not ; for through shame
 I shunn'd the converse of the many, prompt
 To question me of this my wretched garb, 455
 My fortunes shame concealing. When a man
 Of high estate from all his glories sinks,
 New to distress, he feels his wretched fall
 With keener anguish than one long inured
 To misery. But want afflicts me now : 460
 I have nor food nor raiment ; proof of this
 Are these poor coverings, relics of my ship,
 Cast on the shore ; for all my former robes,
 My radiant vests, the pride of gorgeous wealth,
 The sea hath swallow'd. In a secret cave 465
 My wife, the fatal cause of all my ills,
 Concealing, and my friends, what few remain,
 Charging to guard my bed,—alone I stray,
 Seeking to furnish them with what their wants
 Demand, if haply I may find supplies. 470
 Seeing this house with lofty battlements
 Embellish'd, and its stately gates, which speak
 A rich man's mansion, hither am I come ;
 For there is hope that from a wealthy house
 Something may for my mariners be gain'd ; 475
 But those who live in penury have naught,
 Had they the will, to give distress relief.
 Who keeps the gate, ho ! from the house who comes,
 The story of my miseries to relate ?

OLD FEMALE SERVANT, MENELAUS.

SER. Who art thou at the gate ? Wilt thou not
 hence, 480
 Nor, standing at the portal, to our lords
 Give high offence ? Or thou wilt die, from Greece
 Thy birth derived ? No Grecian hence returns.
 MEN. Well, aged dame, in all this hast thou said.
 Might I—I will obey :—yet might I speak. 485
 SER. Begone ; for, stranger, this on me is charged,
 That none of Grecian birth approach this house.

MEN. Lift not thine hand, nor drive me hence by force.

SER. Thou heed'st not what I say: thine is the blame.

MEN. Return into the house, and tell thy lords—

SER. Ill would it be for thee to tell thy words. 491

MEN. I come a stranger, wreck'd; such none abuse.

SER. Go now from hence, and seek some other house.

MEN. No; I will enter here: do thou comply.

SER. Thou art troublesome: force soon will drive thee hence. 495

MEN. Ah me! ah me! where now my glorious hosts?

SER. 'Mong them thou mightst be honour'd, but not here.

MEN. O fortune, what unworthy insult this!

SER. What piteous sorrow dewes thine eyes with tears?

MEN. Remembrance of my former happy state. 500

SER. Hence, then, and to thy friends present thy tears.

MEN. What country this, and whose this royal house?

SER. Proteus dwells here, and Egypt is the land.

MEN. Egypt! O misery, whither am I driven!

SER. Why dost thou charge the race of Nile with blame? 505

MEN. I blame them not: my fortune I lament.

SER. Many feel sorrows, and not thou alone.

MEN. But is the king thou namest in the house?

SER. This is his tomb: his son is Egypt's lord.

MEN. Where is he? in the house, or absent hence? 510

SER. Absent, but to the Greeks a ruthless foe.

MEN. And what the cause, whose sad effects I feel?

SER. Helena, sprung from Jove, is in this house.

MEN. How say'st thou? What thy word? Speak it again.

SER. The daughter of the Spartan Tyndarus. 515

MEN. Whence comes she? Much I marvel what this means.

SER. Hither from Lacedæmon's realm she came.

MEN. When?—Is my wife borne from the cave away?

SER. Before the Grecians, stranger, march'd to Troy.

But haste thee from the gate; for in this house 520
Distraction reigns; all is confusion here.

In an ill time thou comest: should my lord
Here seize thee, all thy welcome will be death.

I to the Grecians am a friend, though rude
The words I gave thee; but I fear my lord. 525

MEN. What can I say? What can I think? A
train

Of present ills added to former ills
Surrounds me, if I reach this land, from Troy
Leading my wife, and in the cavern'd rock
She safe is guarded; and another here, 530

Bearing her name, hath in this royal house
Her habitation. But the aged dame
Said that she sprung from Jove. Is there a man
Upon the banks of Nile who bears the name
Of Jove? for he that reigns in heaven is one. 535

Where in the world is Sparta, but alone
Where 'mid his reeds his beauteous-winding stream,
Eurotas rolls? The name of Tyndarus

Is singly known to fame. And where the land
That bears with Lacedæmon and with Troy 540
Like names? In truth, I know not what to say.

But various men, it seems, in various lands,
Have the same name, and various towns with
towns,

With women women: naught in this is strange.
Nor for the servant's menace will I fly: 545
For there is no man of that barbarous soul,

Hearing my name, who will not give me food.
 The flames of Troy are through the world renown'd,
 And Menelaus, who greatly kindled them,
 Is in no land unknown. I then will wait 550
 The coming of the king : yet this requires
 A double caution : if his soul be fierce
 And savage, to my wreck'd bark I will speed,
 Myself concealing ; if he aught disclose
 Of gentle manners, I will ask such aid 555
 As suits my present wretched circumstance.
 This in my miseries is of all my ills
 The greatest, that of other kings, myself
 A king, I beg the poor supplies of life ;
 But hard Necessity constrains : not mine 560
 This saying, but the sentence of the sage,—
 Nothing is stronger than Necessity.

MENELAUS, CHORUS.

CHO. From the prophetic virgin, as her voice
 Within the royal house disclosed the fates,
 I heard that Menelaus hath not yet sunk 565
 To the dark shades of Erebus, entomb'd
 In earth, but, on the boisterous billows toss'd,
 Hath not yet reach'd the harbours of his country,
 His life with wanderings wretched, of his friends
 Bereft, and driven to many a distant shore, 570
 As in his bark he ploughs his way from Troy.

HELENA, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

HEL. I to this hallow'd tomb again return,
 My seat resuming, from Theonoe,
 Who all things knows, in truths that joy my soul
 Instructed ; for she says my husband lives, 575
 And views the light of heaven, but wandering wide,
 And toss'd o'er various seas ; nor will he come
 Unexercised in ills, whene'er his toils
 Shall find an end. One thing she did not say,
 If safe he should return ; this I forbore 580
 Plainly to ask, transported with my joy

That he is safe. She said too that ev'n now
 He to this place is nigh, wreck'd on this coast,
 With a few friends. O, wouldst thou come to me,
 As thy arrival is my soul's warm wish!— 585
 Ah, who is this? Am I in secret toils
 Ensnared, here planted by the impious son
 Of Proteus? With a courser's eager speed,
 Or like a bounding Thyad, to the tomb
 Shall I not spring? Of rude and savage look 590
 Is he, who lies in wait to seize me here.

MEN. Thou who with terror wing'd dost urge thy
 flight

To the tomb's base, and its ascending flames,
 Stay: wherefore dost thou fly? That form, just
 shown,
 Strikes me with wonder and astonishment. 595

HEL. O virgins, I am injured, by this man
 Kept from the tomb by force: his base design
 To seize me, and deliver to his lord;
 The tyrant, from whose nuptials I am fled.

MEN. I am no ruffian, none to mischief hired. 600

HEL. Nay, ev'n the weeds that clothe thy limbs
 are base.

MEN. Stay thy swift foot, and lay thy fears aside.

HEL. I stay; now I have reach'd this hallow'd
 place.

MEN. Who art thou? What a form do I behold!

HEL. And who art thou? Like thee am I in doubt.

MEN. Such a resemblance ne'er did I behold. 606

HEL. Ye gods! For 'tis a god to agnize our friends.

MEN. Art thou of Greece, or native of this land?

HEL. Of Greece: thy country too I wish to know.

MEN. Thou, lady, hast the form of Helena. 610

HEL. And thou of Menelaus. I stand amazed.

MEN. Rightly a wretched man dost thou avow.

HEL. To thy wife's arms at length art thou re-
 turn'd?

MEN. What wife? Stand off: thou shalt not touch
 my vests

HEL. Whom Tyndarus, my father, gave to thee. 615

MEN. Light-bearing Hecate, send friendly visions.

HEL. Thou seest no phantom of her nightly train.

MEN. I am not, sure, the husband of two wives.

HEL. What other wife hath right to call thee lord ?

MEN. She whom the cave conceals, from Phrygia brought. 620

HEL. It is not so: thou hast no wife but me.

MEN. Have I my sense ? Or is mine eye deceived ?

HEL. What, seeing me, dost thou not see thy wife ?

MEN. The form is like: but I want certain proof.

HEL. What proof ? reflect: who better knows than thou ? 625

MEN. Thou hast her form; that I shall not deny.

HEL. Who shall inform thee better than thine eyes ?

MEN. Here lies the doubt; I have another wife.

HEL. I never went to Troy; my image went.

MEN. Who could with inbreathed life an image frame ? 630

HEL. The Æther, whence thou hast a heaven-form'd wife.

MEN. Form'd by what god ? Thy words surpass belief.

HEL. By Juno; me that Paris might not gain.

MEN. Here and at Troy at once how couldst thou be ? 634

HEL. This of my name, not person, could be true.

MEN. Let me begone; I came with griefs enough.

HEL. Me for an empty image wilt thou leave ?

MEN. And fare thou well, since thou art like my wife.

HEL. Ah, I receive, but not retain my lord !

MEN. To this my great toils past, not thou, constrain. 640

HEL. Was ever woman such a wretch as I !

My dearest friends forsake me: never Greece,
My country never shall I visit more.

MESSENGER, MENELAUS, HELENA, CHORUS.

MES. Long have I sought thee, Menelaus, with
 pain
 All this barbaric country wandering o'er, 645
 Sent by thy friends left in the secret cave.

MEN. By these barbarians plunder'd? What hath
 chanced?

MES. Things marvellous, the facts surpassing
 words.

MEN. Say what: something of new thy zeal im-
 ports.

MES. Thou hast sustain'd a thousand toils in vain.

MEN. These are old woes: what hast thou to re-
 late? 651

MES. Thy wife is gone into the rolling air
 Borne from the sight, and lost amid the sky,
 Leaving the solemn cave, in whose recess
 We guarded her; but, ere she vanish'd, spoke 655
 These words: "O ye unhappy sons of Troy,
 And all ye Grecians, on Scamander's banks
 For me you died, by Juno's fraud you died,
 Deeming that Paris triumph'd in the charms
 Of Helena, who ne'er was his. The time 660
 Assign'd me I have staid; and now, complete
 The fate-appointed work, to Æther go,
 My father: but the unhappy Helena,
 Who knows no guilt, feels all the cruel wounds
 Of infamy."—Ha! art thou here? Oh hail, 665
 Daughter of Leda! To the stars I said
 Thou hadst retired, not knowing that on wings
 Thou hadst the power to fly: no more from thee
 This mockery I allow: enough of toils
 Thy husband, and his valiant friends in arms, 670
 At Ilium, lady, for thy sake have borne.

MEN. It is so: truth is in her words; with these
 They hold agreement. O, the wish'd-for day,
 Which gives me thus to clasp thee in my arms!

HEL. O thou most dear of men! The time indeed
 Was tedious, but the joy is come at last. 676

Mine is the pleasure, O my friends, my lord
To have received, and in the rolling course
Of yon bright sun to hang on his dear hand.

MEN. And I on thine. I have a thousand things
To say, but know not which to mention first. 681

HEL. I am all joy: the tresses on my head
Are raised like wings: my eyes o'erflow with
tears.

What pleasure round thee thus to throw my arms,
O my loved lord! thy sight transports my soul. 685

MEN. Fate now is kind: once more I hold my
wife,

Daughter of Jove and Leda; bless'd, once bless'd,
With her two brothers, on their snow-white steeds
Conspicuous, at her nuptials waved the torch;
But the gods bore her from my house away. 690

HEL. But lead us to a happier fortune now:
The ill is now a blessing, and hath brought
My husband to me: tedious the delay,
But may this blessing be confirm'd to me!

MEN. Be it confirm'd; thy wish is mine: if one
Is wretched, wretched must the other be. 696

HEL. My friends, my friends, for sorrows past no
more

I weep, I mourn no more: I have my lord,
I have my lord, whom many a rolling year
Sad I expected to return from Troy. 700

MEN. And I have thee. How many thousand suns
Have roll'd, ere what the goddess wrought I knew!

HEL. My tears from joy, more than from sorrow,
flow.

What should I say? What mortal this could hope?
Beyond my thought I clasp thee to my breast. 705

MEN. And I clasp thee to mine. I thought indeed
That to the Idæan city thou hadst fled,
The unhappy towers of Troy. But, by the gods,
How from my house wast thou convey'd away?

HEL. Ah me! my woes thou to their bitter source
Wouldst trace, a tale of sorrow thou wouldst hear.

MEN. Speak : what the gods have wrought attention claims. 712

HEL. Howe'er I tell it, it will shock my soul.

MEN. Yet speak : with pleasure sorrows past we hear.

HEL. Ne'er to the bed of the barbaric youth 715
Came I with winged sails, with winged love :
His baleful nuptials never did I know.

MEN. What god, what fate, then, bore thee from thy country ?

HEL. The son of Jove, O my loved lord, the son
Of Jove convey'd me to the banks of Nile. 720

MEN. This of thy guide excites astonishment ;
Thy words are marvellous.

HEL. I weep ; mine eyes
Are wet with tears. The wife of Jove design'd
My ruin.

MEN. Why to ills devoting thee ?

HEL. Ah me, the baths, the fountains, where their
charms 725

The goddesses with added grace adorn'd !
Thence came the judgment, source of all my ills.

MEN. Did Juno for this judgment work thee wo ?

HEL. That me from Paris she might bear away,
A prize by Venus promised to his arms. 730

MEN. How wretched !

HEL. Yes, that wretchedness was mine :
So I was borne to Egypt.

MEN. And she gave
For thee a phantom in thy figure form'd !

HEL. But in my house, what woes, what woes !
Ah me,

My mother !

MEN. What of her hast thou to speak ? 735

HEL. My mother is no more : by her own hands,
In anguish for my foul disgrace, she died.

MEN. I weep for her : but doth thy daughter live,
The young Hermione ?

HEL. She lives, loved lord,

But lives unwedded, lonely ; and with sighs 740
The shame of my unhallow'd nuptials mourns.

MEN. O Paris, thou hast ruin'd all my house !
But on thyself the ruin hast thou drawn,
And on ten thousand Grecians clad in arms.

HEL. Me too, ill-fated and accursed, the god 745
Forced from my country, from my state, from thee,
Because I left my house, my nuptial bed,
Which yet I left not, led by shameful love.

CHO. If blessings on your future life await,
Your past afflictions may be well repaid. 750

MES. Let me too, Menelaus, your joys partake :
I hear them, but a clearer knowledge want.

MEN. Thou too, old man, in our discourse shalt
share.

MES. Our toils at Ilium did not she dispense ?

MEN. Not she ; the gods deceived us : in our
hands
We held a cloud-form'd image fraught with ills. 756

MES. What, for a phantom have we borne vain
toils ?

MEN. These are the works of Juno, and the strife
Of the three rival beauties of the skies.

MES. Is this a real woman, and thy wife ? 760

MEN. She is : these things believe thou on my
word.

MES. The gods, my child, to different men assign
Fortunes as different : in their counsels dark,
Nor traced by human wisdom, they with ease
Effect their various purposes : one toils, 765
Another knows not toil, but all at once
Ruin o'erwhelms him. You have had full share,
Thou and thy husband, of afflictions, thou
From evil fame, he in the works of war.
But, while he toil'd, he by his toils attain'd 770
Naught of advantage ; he attains it now,
And its choice blessings fate spontaneous pours.
Thy aged father and thy brothers sprung

From Jove thou hast not shamed, nor hast done
aught

Of what was bruited. Pleased I now renew 775

Thy nuptials; ready memory now recalls
'The torches which I bore, when thy four steeds
I drove, and in the car with him thou sat'st
A bride, exchanging thy illustrious house.

Vile is the wretch who doth not hold his lords 780

In reverence, nor rejoices in their joy,
Nor in their sorrows grieves. It is my wish,
'Though born a slave, among the generous slaves
'To be accounted, bearing a free mind,

If not the name: for better this I deem 785

'Than two bad things, to harbour a base-mind,
And hear from those around the name of slave.

MEN. 'Tis well, old man: oft, standing at my
shield,

Hast thou amid my toils sustain'd thy share
Of toils: my happier fortune sharing now, 790

Go to the cave, and to my friends there left
Relate what here hath happen'd: on the shore
Charge them to stay, the conflicts which I deem
Must here be mine, awaiting, and to mark
How from this country we may speed our sails; 795
That, sharing all one fortune, we may find
Some means from these barbarians to be saved.

MES. This shall be done, O king. But I have
seen

How vain, how full of falsehoods is the skill
Of the divining seers; nor is there aught 800

Of firm assurance in the blazing fires,
Or in the voice of birds. How weak to deem
That to man's welfare birds can aught avail!

For to the Grecian host nor voice nor sign
Did Calchas give, that for a cloud he saw 805

His dear friends die; but Ilium was destroy'd
In vain. The god, thou haply mayst reply,
So will'd not: why to auguries then fly?

By sacrifice we ought to ask the gods

For blessings, and omit prophetic signs, 810
 Inventions to delude man's life in vain.

Never was man made rich on hallow'd flames
 By idly gazing: the best augury
 Is prudence, which to well-weigh'd counsels guides.

CHO. Of auguries, with thine, old man, my
 thoughts 815

Accord: for he, who hath the gods his friends,
 Hath in his house the truest oracle.

HEL. It may be so: here thus far all is well.
 Much-suffering man, how wast thou saved from
 Troy?

To know avails not; yet a friend must feel 820
 A wish to hear the ills a friend hath borne.

MEN. Much hast thou ask'd in brief: but of my
 toils

Why should I tell thee in the Ægean sea;
 Of flames that gleam'd above the Eubœan wave
 By Nauplius kindled; of the Cretan towns 825

And Libyan, which I pass'd; why of the rocks
 Of Perseus? for I would not weary thee

With the recital. It would pain my soul
 To speak my ills: I had enough of toil

In suffering them; my griefs I twice should bear.

HEL. Discreeter are thy words than mine, which
 made 831

The inquiry: yet, omitting all the rest,
 Tell me one thing; how long hast thou been
 toss'd

On the rough sea, contending with the waves?

MEN. Besides ten toilsome years at Ilium pass'd,
 Seven times the sun hath roll'd his annual course.

825 When the Grecians were returning from Troy, Nauplius, in revenge for the death of his son Palamedes, kindled fires on the heights of Eubœa: the fleet, deceived by these, ran on the rocks of Caphareus, a mountain of Eubœa, and suffered greatly.

827 The western coast of Africa, where Perseus slew Medusa.

HEL. O, thou hast named a tedious time ; and
 saved, 837
 From thence thou hither to be slain art come.

MEN. What say'st thou ! To be slain ! This
 ruin whence ?

HEL. Fly, quickly fly, and quit this barbarous land,
 Or thou wilt die by him that rules this house. 841

MEN. What have I done deserving such an ill ?

HEL. Hindering my nuptials, 'gainst his will thou
 comest.

MEN. Is there one here who wills to wed my
 wife ?

HEL. And with rude insults : such have I sus-
 tain'd. 845

MEN. Some potent lord, or he who here is king ?

HEL. The son of Proteus, monarch of these
 realms.

MEN. This then is what the servant darkly spoke.

HEL. At what barbaric portal hast thou stood ?

MEN. At this, whence as a beggar I was driven.

HEL. Didst thou then beg for food ? Unhappy
 me ! 851

MEN. That was in fact my purpose, though not
 named.

HEL. All that concerns my nuptials then thou
 know'st.

MEN. Save this, if thou hast shunn'd these bridal
 rites.

HEL. Pure, be assured, have I preserved thy bed.

MEN. What proof ? Most grateful are thy words,
 if true. 856

HEL. Seest thou my wretched seat beside that
 tomb ?

MEN. A couch of leaves : what there hast thou
 to do ?

HEL. A suppliant there these nuptials to avoid.

MEN. Are altars rare, or these your barbarous
 rites ? 860

HEL. This, like the temples of the gods, protects

MEN. May I not then conduct thee to my house?

HEL. The sword awaits thee, rather than my bed.

MEN. So should I be of mortals most a wretch.

HEL. Let not shame stay thee now: fly from this land. 865

MEN. And leave thee? Troy for thee I laid in dust.

HEL. Better than for my bed by him to die.

MEN. Unmanly this, and much unworthy Troy.

HEL. The tyrant, if thou wouldst, thou canst not kill.

MEN. What, will the sword on him imprint no wound? 870

HEL. Wisdom attempts not things impossible.

MEN. Shall I then tamely yield my hands to chains?

HEL. Caution is here required, and much of art.

MEN. 'Tis nobler in some great attempt to die.

HEL. There is one hope, by which we may be saved. 875

MEN. By gifts, by daring, or persuasive speech?

HEL. If the king knows not thou art here arrived.

MEN. Who shall inform him? Me he will not know.

HEL. Within one aids him equal to the gods.

MEN. Some voice perchance there holds its secret seat. 880

HEL. No; but his sister, named Theonoe.

MEN. Oracular the name; but what her power?

HEL. She all things knows, and will inform her brother.

MEN. Then I must die: I cannot be conceal'd.

HEL. Her gentle nature suppliant might we win—

MEN. Win to do what? What hope dost thou present? 886

HEL. Not to disclose that thou art here arrived.

880 A divine voice, that declares future events without an interpreter or prophet.

MEN. If we prevail, safe may we leave this land?

HEL. If she our counsels shares; but not by stealth.

MEN. Be this thy task: on woman woman wins.

HEL. Her knees these hands shall not forbear to clasp. 891

MEN. What if to our entreaties she be deaf?

HEL. Then thou must die, and I by force must wed.

MEN. Thou wouldst betray me: force is thy pretence.

HEL. No; by thy head, a sacred oath, I swear—

MEN. Swear what? To die, and never stain my bed? 896

HEL. By the same sword; and 'near thee will I lie.

MEN. Take my right hand; on that confirm thy oath.

HEL. I take it; if thou diest, to leave this light.

MEN. And I, deprived of thee, will leave my life.

HEL. How, if we die, with glory shall we die? 901

MEN. I on this tomb will kill thee, and then kill

Myself; but for thy bed I first will strive

In a bold conflict: but whoe'er hath will,

Let him come near; my glory won at Troy 905

I will not sully; nor, to Greece return'd,

Receive this keen reproach;—that I deprived

Thetis of her Achilles; that I saw

The Telamonian Ajax and the son

Of Theseus die, yet dared not leave the light 910

For my own wife. No; for the gods are wise,

And on the brave man, fallen beneath his foes,

Light in his tomb will lay the earth; but heap

Its gross and cumbrous burden on the base.

CHO. O, may the race of Tantalus, ye gods, 915

At length be bless'd, nor know affliction more!

HEL. Unhappy me! for such my fortune now:

Ruin comes rolling on us: from the house

Theonoe, the fate-foretelling virgin, 919

Comes forth; the house resounds, as from the doors
 The bolts move backward. Fly: but wherefore fly?
 Absent or present, she thy coming knows.
 Ah me, unhappy, how am I undone!
 From Troy and that barbaric country saved,
 Here shalt thou fall by the barbaric sword. 925

THEONOE, HELENA, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

THEON. Go thou before me, bearing in thine hand
 The lighted torch; and, as the solemn rite
 Demands, with incense scent the ambient air,
 That pure I may receive the breath of heaven.
 But if the way by tread of impious foot 930
 Hath been polluted, purge it with the flame,
 And strike it with the torch, that I may pass.
 My rites perform'd in honour of the gods,
 Bear to my Lares back their sacred flame.—
 Well, Helena; had my responses aught 935
 Of truth? Thy husband, Menelaus, is come,
 And stands before us, of his ships deprived,
 And of thy image. What a world of toils,
 Unhappy man, escaped, art thou arrived!
 Nor dost thou know if home thou shalt return, 940
 Or here remain. A council of the gods
 Will this day round the throne of Jove be held,
 With no small strife, on thee: for Juno, once
 Thy foe, propitious now, thy safe return
 To Sparta wills, with her; that Greece may know
 How Paris in unreal nuptials joy'd, 946
 The gift of Venus: thy return her will
 Opposes, lest, detected, she appear
 By fraud the prize of beauty to have gain'd,
 With Helena's ill-promised nuptials bought 950
 On me the event depends, should I inform,
 As Venus wills, my brother, that thou here
 Art present, and destroy; or, taking part
 With Juno, save thy life, thy presence here
 Hid from my brother, who hath given me charge 955
 To tell him, shouldst thou chance to reach this land.

How must it be ? Shall I my brother show
That thou art here, my safety to procure ?

HEL. O virgin, suppliant at thy knees I fall
(A seat that suits the unhappy), for myself, 960
For him, whom, absent long, and scarce received,
Dying I soon must see. Ah, do not tell
Thy brother that my husband is return'd
To these fond arms: but, I entreat thee, save,
O, save him ! For thy brother do not sell 965
Thy piety, betray'd to purchase thanks
Unhallow'd and unjust. The gods abhor
All acts of violence, commanding men
To enjoy what honour hath acquired, but naught
By rapines wrested: wealth must be disdain'd 970
If by injustice grasp'd. The air of heaven
Is to all mortals free; the earth is free,
In which our houses we may fill with wealth,
Not take from others, plundering them by force.
Me by divine command, but to my peace 975
Destructive, Hermes to thy father gave,
To save me for my husband: he is here,
He wishes to receive me: how, if dead,
Can he receive me? Can thy sire restore
The living to the dead? Do thou revere 980
Thy father and the powers of heaven: perpend
This question:—Would the god, and he who lies
Beneath this hallow'd tomb, wish to retain
Another's right, or wish to give it back?
To give it back, I think. Behooves thee then 985
Not to regard thy brother's foolish wish
More than thy father's honour. In the fates
If thou art skill'd, and hast o'er things divine
High charge; thy father's justice shouldst thou
wrong,
And to thy unjust brother grant this grace; 990
It were foul shame indeed that thou shouldst know
All things divine, what is, and what is not,
And not know justice. But with pity view
My wretched state, and save me from these ills.

Through the wide world is Helena abhorr'd, 995
 Bruited through Greece as to her nuptial bed
 Disloyal, for the pomp of splendid Troy
 Exchanged: but should I e'er return to Greece,
 Should I revisit Sparta, they would hear,
 Would see, that by the illusion of the gods 1000
 They perish'd, and that I was never false,
 My friends betraying: thus should I regain
 My fame of modesty; my daughter thus
 In nuptials give, whom no man now will wed:
 Here shall my cruel wanderings end, and I 1005
 Once more enjoy the riches of my house.
 If he had died, and on the funeral pile
 Been laid, though distant far, my tears had shown
 How much I loved him: shall I lose him now,
 Safe as he is and living, from me torn? 1010
 No, virgin: this, thy suppliant, I entreat;
 Grant me this grace, and emulate the deeds
 Of thy just father. On a child this beams
 The brightest glory, when he draws his birth
 From an illustrious father, that he holds 1015
 The great example always in his view.

THEON. Thy words move pity; pity to thyself
 Is due: but I from Menelaus would hear
 With what address he for his life will plead.

MEN. I at thy knees shall neither deign to fall, 1020
 Nor dew mine eyes with tears: my fame at Troy,
 If now with fear appall'd, I should disgrace.
 They say indeed it shows a generous mind,
 When great misfortunes press, to pour the tear:
 This generous, if aught generous it may be, 1025
 Shall not be mine: my firmness I will hold.
 If it seems good to thee to save a man,
 A stranger, who, with justice on his side,
 Seeks to regain his wife, give me my wife,
 Nay, further, save me: if it seems not good, 1030
 I shall not now first learn what misery is,
 And a base woman thou wilt show thyself.
 But what is worthy of me, what I deem

Just, and what most perchance may touch thy heart,
 That to thy father's tomb I will address:— 1035
 Revered old man, who in this miserable tomb
 Hast now thy mansion, hear me; give me back
 My wife, whom to thy justice Jove consign'd,
 To guard her for me. Thou, I know, wilt ne'er
 Restore her; thou art dead: yet will not she 1040
 Brook that her father, from the dead invoked,
 Her father once in glory high renown'd,
 Suffer dishonour: hers is now the power.
 Thee too, dread monarch of the infernal realms,
 I to my aid invoke; for many dead, 1045
 Who for her sake fell by this sword in war,
 Thou hast received: thou hast thy prey: and now
 Or give them back to heaven's ethereal light,
 Or force her, with a virtue that outshines
 Her pious sire's, to give me back my wife. 1050
 But if you rend her from me, what her word
 Declared not, I will speak. O virgin, know,
 That we are bound by oath thy brother first
 To oppose with arms; he then must fall, or I:
 These are plain words: but if he dares not stand
 The bloody contest, to destroy us bent 1056
 By famine, suppliants at this tomb, my hand
 Shall kill her; that is fix'd; through my own breast
 Then drive the trenchant sword, ev'n on this tomb,
 That through the sepulchre our blood may flow. 1060
 Thus on this marble monument in death
 Together will we lie, eternal grief
 To thee, and to thy father foul disgrace:
 For never shall thy brother wed my wife,
 Another never: I will bear her with me, 1065
 If not to Sparta, to the realms below.
 But wherefore this? If I to tears should melt
 With female softness, piteous I should seem
 Rather than dauntless. Kill me, if thy will
 Be such; inglorious, be thou well assured, 1070
 Thou shalt not kill me. Rather let my words
 Move thee: be just; let me receive my wife.

CHO. Thou, virgin, art the umpire in this cause :

Let thy decision then give joy to all.

THEON. To pity my nature and my will 1075
 Incline :: myself I reverence, nor will stain
 My father's glory ; neither will I grant
 That to my brother, which will mark my name
 With infamy : for Justice in my heart
 Hath raised her ample shrine ; for Nereus this 1080
 I hold, and Menelaus will strive to save.
 Since Juno wills to do thee grace, with her
 Shall be my suffrage : Venus may I find
 Propitious to me, though with her I ne'er
 Held commerce, and my virgin purity 1085
 Wish to retain. What at this tomb thou said'st
 As to my father foul disgrace, the same
 I say : not giving her, I were unjust.
 Were he now living, he to thee would give
 Thy wife, and thee to her. Revenge belongs 1090
 To those that to the realms below are sunk,
 And to all men that breathe this vital air.
 The soul of the deceased, though now no more
 In life, amid the immortal ether holds
 Its mansion, and immortal sense retains. 1095
 But, not to lengthen speech, at thy request
 I will be silent, nor where folly rules
 Be aiding to my brother ; for his good
 Thus shall I work, though otherwise he deem,
 From impious deeds to Virtue's holy paths 1100
 Recalling him. But how to escape, find you :
 I shall retire, my lips in silence closed.
 But first address the gods ; with suppliant vows
 To Venus her permission, that again
 Thou to thy country mayst return, implore ; 1105
 To Juno, that her purpose she retain,
 Benevolent to thee and to thy wife.
 And thou, my father, now among the dead,
 Shalt never, far as I have power, be call'd
 Impious, for piety while living famed. 1110

CHO. Never did blessings on the unrighteous wait ;
But hopes of safety ne'er forsake the just.

HELENA, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

HEL. We from the virgin, far as in her lies,
Have safety, Menelaus : behooves thee now
Sage counsel, our escape how best to effect. 1115

MEN. Then hear me : in this house thou long hast
dwelt,
And with the king's attendants much hast lived.

HEL. Why sayst thou this ? Thou givest me hope ;
thy thought
Hath something for our common safety form'd.

MEN. One, who commands the coursers of the
king, 1120
Couldst thou persuade to intrust us with a car ?

HEL. Perchance I could : but how direct our flight,
The ways, and this barbaric land, unknown ?
Impossible.

MEN. Then place me in the house,
Conceal'd : the king I with this sword will slay. 1125

HEL. The virgin would not suffer this, nor bear
Silent thy purpose 'gainst her brother's life.

MEN. I have no bark, in which we may be saved
By flying ; for the sea hath swallow'd mine.

HEL. Hear, if aught wise a woman may propose.
Wilt thou my words may speak of thee as dead ? 1131

MEN. That were an omen boding ill : yet thence
May aught be gain'd, report of me as dead.

HEL. By female wailings, and my tresses shorn,
I may to pity move this impious man. 1135

MEN. What hope of safety can this give ? Indeed,
It bears the semblance of some ancient rite.

HEL. An empty tomb to give thee, in the sea
As sunk, the tyrant's leave will I implore.

MEN. And, should he grant it, how without a bark,
Raising this empty tomb, shall we be saved ? 1141

HEL. A bark too will I ask, and what may grace
Thy tomb place in it, for the embracing wave.

MEN. Save one thing, all is well: should he on
land

Bid the tomb rise, thy plea will naught avail. 1145

HEL. But I will say, on land our Grecian rites
No tomb to those who died at sea allow.

MEN. This speaks success: then with thee will I
sail,

And with us bear the honours for my tomb.

HEL. Thou must be present, and thy mariners, 1150
Who, from the wreck escaping, reach'd the shore.

MEN. And if I find an anchor'd bark, to man
Shall man opposed wave fierce the flaming sword.

HEL. That to direct be thine: but may the gales
Breathe favouring, and the vessel safely sail! 1155

MEN. It will: the gods will give my toils to cease.
But of my death who wilt thou say inform'd thee?

HEL. Thyself, alone preserved, and with the son
Of Atreus sailing, say thou saw'st him die.

MEN. These tatter'd vestments round my body
wrapp'd 1160

Will testify my wretched vessel's wreck.

HEL. They suit this purpose; and thy loss, then
deem'd

Unhappy, may our better-fortune work.

MEN. Should I attend thee to this royal house,
Or take my station silent at this tomb? 1165

HEL. Stay here: for aught of outrage should his
pride

Attempt, this tomb will guard thee, and thy sword.

I will go in, cut off these crisped locks,

For sable change these white robes, rend these
cheeks,

And make them stream with blood; for great the
prize 1170

In contest, and of doubtful poise: to die,

If in my arts detected; or once more

To visit Sparta, and to save thy life.

O Juno, partner of the bed of Jove, 1174

Goddess revered, two wretches from their woes

EURIP. VOL. III.—H

Relieve, we suppliant beg thee, stretching thus
 Our hands to yon star-spangled sky, thy seat.
 And thou, who by my nuptials didst obtain
 The prize of beauty, Venus, crush me not :
 O daughter of Dione, I from thee 1180
 Enough of sorrow have sustain'd, my name,
 Not person, 'mong barbarians given by thee
 To shameful note : permit me, if thy will
 To death devotes me, in my native land
 To die. But why with mischiefs is thy soul 1185
 Unsated, loves, deceits, and wily trains
 Still working, and the filter'd bowls with blood
 Banefully mix'd ? Were moderation thine,
 Of all the gods most pleasing wouldst thou be
 To men : I speak not this without just cause. 1190

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

On thee, high-nested in the museful shade
 By close-inwoven branches made,
 Thee, sweetest bird, most musical
 Of all that warble their melodious song
 The charmed woods among, 1195
 Thee, tearful Nightingale, I call :
 O, come, and from thy dark-plumed throat
 Swell sadly sweet thy melancholy note.
 Attemper'd to my voice of wo,
 For Helen let thy sorrows flow, 1200
 For all the griefs her breast that pain'd,
 For all the toils that Troy sustain'd,
 Where Misery pours the streaming tear,
 And shudders at the Grecian spear.
 Proudly the billows bounding o'er, 1205
 He came, he came, he reach'd the shore ;
 Back his barbaric oars he plies,
 From Sparta's strand to Phrygia flies,
 Destined to Priam's realms to bear
 A darkening storm, the storm of war, 1210

By Venus hapless Paris led
To seek, as thine, a fatal bed.

ANTISTROPHE I.

By rocky masses hurtling in the air,
Beneath the sword, beneath the spear,
Fell many Grecians in the fight: 1215
With tresses shorn their wives bewail the dead,
Bewail their widow'd bed.
Many the fatal blazing light,
Which lonely-sailing Nauplius gave,
And raised it gleaming o'er the Eubœan wave, 1220
Led on the rocks that lie below,
Where tall Caphareus lifts his brow;
Many on Ægæ's sea-beat shore
The treacherous flame to ruin bore;
Where its rude sides the mountain bends, 1225
No friendly port its arms extends.
When from their country on the main
Launch'd in proud pomp the Phrygian train,
And, wanton in their swelling sails,
Breathed to their wish the flattering gales, 1230
From Greece their prize, no prize, they bore,
But her revenge athirst for gore;
A breathing phantom for the fair,
By Juno form'd of imaged air.

STROPHE II.

Was this then human, or divine? 1235
Did it a middle nature share?
What mortal shall declare?
Who shall the secret bounds define?
When the gods work, we see their power;
We see on their high bidding wait 1240
The prosperous gales, the storms of fate:
But who their awful councils shall explore?
Thou, Helen, art from Jove:
O'er Leda's breast spread heaven's high king,
In form a swan, his silver wing: 1245
The fruit thou of his love.

Yet Fame through Greece hath publish'd wide
 Thee to thy loose desires a prey ;
 That, truth, faith, justice, heaven defied,
 Thy beauty shines but to betray. 1250
 Nothing 'mong mortals certainty affords ;
 But the gods speak, and truth is in their words.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Think you, fond men, whose martial pride
 Glows 'mid the bleeding ranks of war,
 By the courageous spear 1255
 The strife of mortals to decide ?
 Vain are your thoughts : should rage abhorr'd,
 That glories in the purple flood,
 The contest only end with blood,
 Unsheathed through angry states would flame the
 sword. 1260
 Outrageous to destroy,
 The spear hath desolation spread,
 With slaughter stain'd the widow'd bed,
 And desolated Troy.
 Yet well might Reason's suasive charms 1265
 Have made each warring foe a friend ;
 But many in the shock of arms
 To Pluto's dreary realms descend ;
 Fires, like the flames of Jove, the walls surround,
 And Ilium's ramparts smoke upon the ground. 1270

THEOCLYMENUS, CHORUS.

THEOC. All hail, my father's tomb ! Beside my
 gate
 Thee, Proteus, I interr'd, that, going out
 And entering, Theoclymenus, thy son,
 Might always greet thee with a fond address.
 You, my attendants, of my hounds take care, 1275
 And in the royal house dispose the nets.
 Much I reproach myself that I with death
 The unfaithful have not punish'd ; for I hear
 That on this coast some Grecian is arrived,
 Unnoticed by my guards : a spy he comes, 1280

Or to bear Helena by stealth away :
 But let me only take him, he shall die.
 Ha ! all his purpose, as it seems, I find
 Accomplish'd ; for the Spartan at the tomb
 Hath left her seat, and from this land is sail'd. 1285
 Unbar the gates, ho ! my attendant train ;
 Harness my steeds ; instant bring forth my cars ;
 Not for a little toil shall she escape,
 Borne hence, whom ardently I wish my bride.
 Forbear : the object of my fond pursuit 1290
 Present I see, not fled as I supposed.

THEOCLYMENUS, HELENA, CHORUS, MENELAUS
at the tomb.

THEOC. Why hast thou changed thy white robes
 for these black
 And mourning weeds ? Why from thy noble head
 Thy tresses hast thou shorn ? What mean these
 tears
 Fresh streaming down thy cheeks ? Arise thy
 griefs 1295
 From some ill-omen'd visions of the night,
 Or from thy country have bad tidings reach'd
 Thine ear, that sorrows thus afflict thy soul ?

HEL. My lord, for by that title now I greet thee,
 I am undone, lost, sunk, to nothing sunk. 1300

THEOC. Wherein lies thy affliction ? What hath
 chanced ?

HEL. How shall I speak it ? Menelaus is dead.

THEOC. In this my fortune hath not less of joy.
 How know'st thou ? Did Theonoe tell thee this ?

HEL. She did, and one who present saw him die.

THEOC. Hath one arrived to inform thee of a
 truth ? 1306

HEL. One comes : O, had he, as I wish'd him,
 come !

THEOC. Who comes ? Where is he ? Clearly
 would I know.

HEL. He who sits trembling at this sacred tomb.

THEOC. Apollo, how unsightly is his garb! 1310

HEL. Ah me! methinks I see my husband thus.

THEOC. Whence is this man? How came he to this land?

HEL. A Grecian, one who with my husband sail'd.

THEOC. What death, by his report, died Menelaus?

HEL. The death most rueful, in the briny waves.

THEOC. Where? As he sail'd on the barbaric seas? 1316

HEL. Forced by the winds on Libya's portless rocks.

THEOC. How then escaped this man, who with him sail'd?

HEL. Oft are the mean more lucky than the great.

THEOC. Where the wreck'd vessel, landing, did he leave? 1320

HEL. Where, O, that he, not Menelaus, had sunk!

THEOC. The vessel lost, how reach'd this man the land?

HEL. Chance brought, he says, some sailors to his aid.

THEOC. Where is the mischief sent, for thee, to Troy? 1324

HEL. The imaged cloud? It vanish'd into air.

THEOC. O Troy, O Priam, ruin'd without cause!

HEL. In Troy's misfortunes I have had large share.

THEOC. Unburied is thy husband, or entomb'd?

HEL. Unburied. My afflictions sink my soul.

THEOC. Are thy bright tresses for this sorrow shorn? 1330

HEL. O, he was dear, while here, most dear to me!

THEOC. Is this then a mischance well wail'd with tears?

HEL. Light would thy grief be, should thy sister die?

THEOC. No. At this tomb wilt thou now hold thy seat?

HEL. Why taunt me thus, and not forbear the
dead. 1335

THEOC. Me, to thy husband faithful, dost thou fly.

HEL. But fly no more: my nuptials now prepare.

THEOC. Though late it comes, thy yielding I ap-
prove.

HEL. Know'st thou what should be done? For-
get the past.

THEOC. For what return? Be grace with grace
repaid. 1340

HEL. A compact form'd, be reconciled to me.

THEOC. My anger flies; I give it to the air.

HEL. Low at thy knees, since now thou art my
friend—

THEOC. What grace, thus stretch'd a suppliant,
wouldst thou ask?

HEL. To honour my dead husband with a tomb.

THEOC. What tomb to him? Wouldst thou en-
tomb his shade? 1346

HEL. Greece hath a rite, whoe'er at sea is lost—

THEOC. What rite? In these things Greece is
deeply skill'd.

HEL. To give him with rich vests an empty tomb.

THEOC. Perform these rites; choose for his tomb
the ground. 1350

HEL. Not thus we bury the lost mariner.

THEOC. How then? I am a stranger to your
rites.

HEL. To sea whate'er becomes the dead we bear.

THEOC. With what shall I supply thee for the
dead?

HEL. I know not: new the sad occasion to me.

THEOC. [*seeing Menelaus.*] O stranger, grateful
tidings hast thou brought. 1356

MEN. To me not grateful, king, nor to the dead.

THEOC. Those how inter you who at sea are lost?

MEN. With honours such as each hath means to
give.

THEOC. Of wealth whate'er thou wilt, for her sake,
speak. 1360

MEN. First to the shades below the victim bleeds.

THEOC. What victims? Name them: those I
shall present.

MEN. Judge thou: whate'er thou grantest will
suffice.

THEOC. A steed or bull barbaric rites require. 1364

MEN. Whate'er thou givest, generous let it be—

THEOC. Of such my fertile pastures have rich
store.

MEN. And empty couches for the body spread;—

THEOC. Those shall be given: what do your rites
ask more?

MEN. Arms of bright brass; for he was fond of
arms;—

THEOC. Worthy the race of Pelops will I give.

MEN. And what of beauteous bloom the earth now
bears. 1371

THEOC. These in what manner give you to the
waves?

MEN. A bark and rowers are for this required.

THEOC. How far from shore must the bark hold
its course?

MEN. Far as the eye discerns its foamy track. 1375

THEOC. This solemn custom why doth Greece ob-
serve?

MEN. That of the oblations none be driven to
land.

THEOC. A swift Phœnician bark shall be prepared.

MEN. That would be well, and grateful to the
dead.

THEOC. This, without her, canst not thou well
perform? 1380

MEN. It is a child's, or wife's, or mother's task.

THEOC. She to her husband then this rite must
pay?

MEN. This piety requires, and not to rob
Of their just rites the dead.

THEOC. Then let her go :
 Yes, to support a pious wife is mine. 1385
 The house I now will enter, and bring forth
 The honours for the dead, nor from this land
 Send thee with empty hands : for her dear sake
 This will I do. The tidings thou hast brought
 Are pleasing to me : raiment in return, 1390
 Throwing this mean garb off, shalt thou receive,
 And food, for wretched is thy present state :
 So to thy country bless'd shalt thou return.
 And thou, unhappy, grieve not thou thy soul
 At ills past cure ; for Menelaus is dead, 1395
 And never can thy husband live again.

MEN. This, lady, now is thine : behooves thee lovè
 Thy present husband, him that is no more
 Forgetting : best thy fortune this beseems.
 If e'er in safety I return to Greece, 1400
 The former foul reproach, which stain'd thy fame,
 I will wipe off, be thou but such a wife
 As to thy husband it is meet thou be.

HEL. Such shall I be : my lord shall ne'er have
 cause
 To blame me ; thou, here present, shalt of this 1405
 Thyself be witness : but, poor wretch, go in,
 Refresh thee in the bath, and change thy garb :
 My kindness shall not linger : with more zeal
 To my loved Menelaus wilt thou perform
 These rites, from us receiving what is meet. 1410

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

In times of old, with eager haste
 The mountain mother of the gods
 Through thick-entangled forests pass'd,
 Along the banks of streaming floods,

1411 This ode was probably intended as a compliment to the Athenians for the veneration in which they held the mysterious rites of Ceres ; the neglect of which is said in the second antistrophe to have been the cause of Helena's misfortunes.

- And where the beating billows roar 1415
 Against the hoarse-resounding shore :
 The virgin of unutterable name
 She fondly sought ; and deepening round
 The Bacchic cymbals loud resound
 (As in her lion-harness'd car she came) 1420
 The virgin, to rude force a prey,
 Borne from her circling nymphs away.
 Attendant on the mighty mother go,
 Swift as the winds, the virgins of the skies ;
 Diana, with her silver bow ; 1425
 And Pallas, prompt her spear to wield,
 The Gorgon frowning on her shield.
 From heaven's high throne Jove roll'd his awful
 eyes,
 And, fix'd the purpose of his mind,
 A different fate assigned : 1430

ANTISTROPHE I.

- When now, her weary wanderings o'er,
 The anxious mother ceased her toil ;
 For vain each secret pass to explore ;
 Her daughter fraud had made its spoil :
 She pass'd o'er Ida's craggy brow, 1435
 Cold nurse of everlasting snow,
 Haunt of the nymphs ; and, to her grief a prey,
 Her limbs upon the damp weeds threw,
 Which 'mid the rocky rudeness grew ;
 Forbad the corn the ploughman's toil to obey ; 1440
 Its verdure to the earth denied ;
 Famine ensued, and mortals died.
 No more the spreading foliage waves around ;
 The flocks no more the gadding tendrils graze,
 But perish on the unfaithful ground : 1445
 No more the victim at the shrine
 Is offered to the powers divine ;
 The hallow'd cakes no more on altars blaze :

1417 It was not allowed to mention the name of Proserpine, lest it should renew the grief of Ceres.

She gives the freshing founts no more
Their crystal streams to pour 1450

STROPHE II.

To men below, to gods above,
When she had caused the feast to cease,
The mourning mother's wrath to appease,
Benign thus spoke imperial Jove :—

“ Ye honour'd Graces, go, 1455
To Ceres go, whose anguish'd soul
Indignant mourns her daughter lost ;
Go, with soft notes her cares control,
And mitigate her wo.

And you, Aonia's tuneful boast, 1460
Ye Muses, go, swell high the choral song ;
The brazen cymbal take,
The deep-toned timbrel wake ;

Till sorrow is no more, the strain prolong.”
First 'mid the heavenly powers with lovely grace
The pipe bright Venus taking in her hand, 1466
Flush'd with a roseate smile her glowing face,
Pleased with the varying notes its stops command.

ANTISTROPHE II.

What neither faith nor laws approve,
Unholy flames hast thou inspired : 1470
These, her fierce wrath against thee fired,
The mighty mother's vengeance move.

Nor to the powers divine
Hast thou, my child, due honours paid.
Much would avail the spotted vest, 1475
With the fawn's skin wert thou array'd ;
Much, with the ivy-twine

Green-wreathing round the thyrsus dress'd ;
Much, the light vestments waving in the air,
While round in many a ring 1480
Their floating folds they fling ;

Much, streaming to the wind the Bacchic hair ;
Much, to the goddess given the sleepless nights :
To her the moon is dearer than the days.
Thou hast neglected all her hallow'd rites, 1485
Proud of the charms thy beauteous form displays.

HELENA, CHORUS.

HEL. Within the house all hath gone well, my friends :

The daughter too of Proteus, our designs
 Concealing, to the king's inquiries made
 Touching my husband present there, replied, 1490
 To do me favour, that this vital air
 He breathed no more, nor view'd the sun's bright
 beams.

And well my husband the advantage seized
 Presented to him ; for he bears himself
 The arms devoted to the waves, the shield 1495
 On his strong arm he holds, and grasps the spear
 In his right hand, as with me to perform
 These honours to the dead : well is he arm'd
 To deeds of valour, and his hand will raise
 A thousand trophies of barbarians slain, 1500
 When we ascend the oar-directed bark.
 His sailor's garb exchanged, he is array'd
 In radiant vests, my gift ; and in the bath
 Refresh'd, to the pure stream a stranger long.—
 But from the house he comes, who fondly deems
 He holds my nuptials ready in his hands. 1506
 I must be silent now, on thy good-will
 And secrecy relying ; that if hence
 We may be saved, you some time we may save.

HELENA, THEOCLYMENUS, MENELAUS, CHORUS, ATTENDANTS.

THEOC. In order, as this stranger shall appoint,
 Proceed, my servants, bearing to the sea 1511
 These honours to the dead. Thou, Helena,
 If not amiss thou deem what I shall speak,
 Be thou advised : stay here ; these things alike
 Thou to thy husband, present, will perform, 1515
 Or if not present ; for I fear for thee,
 Lest, urged by thy impassion'd grief, thou cast
 Thyself into the ocean's swelling wave,

In wild distraction for thy husband lost ;
 For bitterly his loss dost thou lament. 1520

HEL. Of my illustrious husband, I perforce
 My wedded converse, and my former bed
 Must honour : for the love I bear my lord,
 I could die with him ; but to him what grace
 To add my death to his ? Permit me then 1525
 Myself to go, and to the dead present
 These sad sepulchral honours : and to thee
 May the gods give ev'n all my soul can wish,
 And to this stranger, for his friendly aid.

But me thou in thine house shalt have a wife, 1530
 Such as thou shouldst have, for thy goodness shown
 To Menelaus and me ; for these things touch
 My heart. But give command that one provide
 The bark, in which these presents we may bear,
 That so thy grace complete I may receive. 1535

THEOC. Go thou, provide them a Sidonian bark
 Of fifty oars, with all its naval train.

HEL. Shall he command it, who adorns the tomb ?

THEOC. Him should my mariners in chief obey.

HEL. Again command, that clearly they may
 know. 1540

THEOC. Again, a third time, if it pleases thee.

HEL. Bless'd mayst thou be, and I in my intents.

THEOC. But do not now too much dissolve in tears.

HEL. This day to thee my grateful soul shall
 show.

THEOC. Care for the dead is naught but empty
 toil. 1545

HEL. My cares in part are there, in part are here.

THEOC. Thou shalt not find me worse than Mene-
 laus.

HEL. In naught I blame thee, be but Fortune kind.

THEOC. Thou mayst command it, give me but thy
 love.

HEL. I am not now to learn to love my friends.

THEOC. Wilt thou that I assist to launch the
 bark ? 1551

EURIP. VOL. III.—I

HEL. Be not a servant to thy servants, king.

THEOC. Well; from the Grecian rites then I abstain:

My house is unpolluted, for not here

Died Menelaus. Go one of you, give charge, 1555

That to my house my prefects bring whate'er

May do my nuptials honour; it is meet

That all my land with joyful songs resound

My hymeneal rites, and Helena's,

And grace them with their due solemnity. 1560

Thou, stranger, to the winding ocean go,

These presents to her former husband give,

Then to my house haste back, and with thee bring

My bride, that thou mayst celebrate with me

My nuptials: to thy country then return, 1565

Or stay, thy life with happiness here bless'd.

MENELAUS, HELENA, CHORUS.

MEN. O Jove (the father thou art call'd, a god
Supremely wise), incline thine eyes to us,

Relieve us from our toils, grant us thy aid,

Now drawing our afflictions up the steep. 1570

Do thou but touch us with thy hand, the height

Of fortune, where we wish, we soon shall reach.

Enough of toils already have we borne.

Hear me, ye gods; much of affliction, much

Of sorrow you have heard: beneath a load 1575

Of ills not always should I sink, but now

At length stand firm: grant me but this one grace,

With blessings all my future life you crown.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Thou swift Phœnician bark, whose prow
Gives birth to billows on the foaming tide, 1580

Joying the furrow'd waves to plough,

And 'mid the dolphins' sportive train to glide;

While o'er the bosom of the deep

Friendly the gales soft-breathing sweep,

And the calm daughter of the azure main 1585
 Thus speaks:—"Secure, ye naval train,
 To Ocean's winds your spreading sails display:
 Now firmly grasp, now ply your oars;
 To realms, where Perseus reign'd, convey
 Your charge, and land her safe on rich Mycenæ's
 shores." 1590

ANTISTROPHE I.

Mayst thou, the river's stream beside,
 The slow-revolving years in absence pass'd,
 Or nigh the dome's brass-glittering pride,
 The daughters of Leucippus reach at last;
 Or sports amid the nightly train 1595
 To Hyacinthus hold again:
 Him, as the disk with erring force he threw,
 Lamented youth, Apollo slew.
 The son of Jove, with many a solemn rite,
 The day to Sparta hallow'd named. 1600
 There may thy daughter bless thy sight,
 For whom no bridal torch with joyful light hath
 flamed.

STROPHE II.

O, might we through the liquid sky
 Wing'd, like the birds of Lydia, fly,
 Birds, which the change of seasons know; 1605
 And, left the wintry storms and snow,
 Their leader's well-known call obey:
 O'er many a desert dry and cultured plain
 He guides the marshal'd train,
 And cheers with jocund notes their way. 1610
 Ye birds that through the aerial height
 Your course with clouds light-sailing share,
 Your flight amid the Pleiads hold,
 And where Orion nightly flames in gold;

1594 From them the virgins, priestesses of Hilaira and Phœbe, who were daughters of Apollo, and the wives of Castor and Pollux, were called Leucippides.

1603 The migration of the cranes is here finely described.

Then on Eurotas' bank alight, 1615
 And this glad message bear :—
 " Your king from Troy shall reach once more,
 With conquest crown'd, his native shore."

ANTISTROPHE II.

Ye sons of Tyndarus, side by side,
 As in a car your coursers guide, 1620
 Descending from the ethereal sky,
 Where whirling shine the stars on high,
 Your bright abode. O, come, and save
 Your sister sailing o'er the azure main ;
 Its swelling tide restrain, 1625
 Its angry-rolling, foamy wave :
 The bark, that wafts her o'er the floods,
 Give the soft gales to attend from Jove ;
 And from the voice of slanderous blame
 Defend the honour of her injured name ; 1630
 Injured e'er since, in Ida's woods,
 For beauty's prize the rivals strove.
 She ne'er in Priam's realms appear'd,
 Nor Ilium's towers by Phœbus rear'd.

THEOCLYMENUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Well have I found thee at thy house, O king,
 That of new ills thou soon mayst be inform'd. 1636

THEOC. What are they ?

MES. Nuptials with some other bride
 Emprise, for Helen from this land is fled.

THEOC. Flying on wings, or walking on the
 ground ?

MES. Her Menelaus hath borne by sea away, 1640
 Coming himself with tidings of his death.

THEOC. Strange and incredible thy words: what
 bark

Hath stretch'd its sails to bear him from this land ?

MES. That which thou gavest the stranger : know,
 in brief,

Having thy mariners, he went on board. 1645

THEOC. How can this be ? I am on fire to know.

That one should master such a numerous crew,
With which I sent thee : this surpasses thought.

MES. When Jove-born Helen left this royal house,
And to the sea advanced, with artful guile 1650
Softly she set her dainty foot, and mourn'd
Her husband near her present, and not dead.

When to the station of thy ships we came,
A prime Sidonian vessel we drew down
Of fifty benches and of fifty oars: 1655

Then task succeeded task ; one raised the mast,
One fix'd the oar and tried the stroke, the sails
Were hoisted, and the helm with chains let down.

Amid these toils, some Grecians we observed,
Who plough'd with Menelaus the stormy seas, 1660

Advancing to the strand : their garb was that
Of shipwreck'd sailors ; manly was their port,

But squalid their appearance : when the son
Of Atreus saw them present, thus he spoke,

Making false show of pity :—" Wretched men, 1665
How came you hither, from what Grecian bark

Wreck'd in the waves ? Will you the mournful rites
To the lost son of Atreus with me pay,

Whom Helen honours with an empty tomb,
His corse not present ?" They, in fraudulent guise 1670

Dropping the tear, ascend the bark, and bear
To Menelaus the oblations, in the sea

Devoted to be sunk. To us this seem'd
Suspicious, and our thoughts we mention'd each

To other, when we saw the numerous train 1675
Enter the ship ; but we restrain'd our tongues,

Obedient to thy words : for when thou gavest
Thy mandate that the stranger should command

The vessel, all these things didst thou confound.
Thy presents in the bark with ease we placed, 1680

All but the bull ; he started from the planks,
And roar'd, and roll'd his glaring eyes around.

Arching his back, and threatening with his horns,
That none dared touch him. Helen's husband then

Thus call'd aloud :—" O you, who rent the towers
12

Of Ilium to the ground, will you not seize, 1686
 As Grecians wont, this bull, and to the ship
 His body on your youthful shoulders bear ?
 A victim to the dead beneath my sword
 Soon shall he bleed." Encouraged by his voice,
 'They seized the bull, they raised him from the
 ground, 1691
 And bore him up the planks, while Menelaus,
 Stroking his neck, bound with one golden cord,
 Soothed him to go on board. When now the bark
 Had all its stores received, with delicate foot, 1695
 Helen, the steps ascending, took her seat
 On the mid deck, and Menelaus, his name
 Not yet acknowledged, near her : at the sides
 The others, on the right and on the left
 In equal numbers man 'gainst man arranged, 1700
 Bearing beneath their vests their swords conceal'd.
 The rowers to their marshal's cheering shout
 Their shout return'd. When now the open sea
 We gain'd, yet from the land not distant far,
 The pilot ask'd, " O stranger, should we sail 1705
 Yet onward, or is this enough ?" He said,
 " This is enough for me ;" then grasp'd his sword
 In his right hand, and to the prow advanced ;
 There standing near the bull, but of the dead
 No mention made, deep in his neck he plunged 1710
 The sword, and pray'd,—“ Great monarch of the
 main,
 Neptune, who dwellest deep beneath the waves ;
 And you, chaste train of Nereids, from this land
 To Nauplia's harbour bear me safe, and bear DS
 My wife uninjured !" Gushing to the sea, 1715
 The streams of blood gave to the stranger signs
 Of glad presage. Then each express'd his thought

1687 The bull was usually led to the altar by the horns : if he went reluctantly, it was deemed an ill omen ; in which case some young men seized him, and carried him on their shoulders : one single cord was bound around his neck ; this was gilt, and adorned with flowers.

Of foul deceit. "To Naxia let us steer
 Our backward course ; give thou command, and thou
 The rudder turn." Then at the slaughter'd bull 1720
 The son of Atreus standing, cried aloud
 To his associates,—“ Why, ye flower of Greece,
 Why this delay ? On these barbarians rush ;
 Kill them, despatch them, hurl them from the ship
 Into the waves.” To this opposed, a voice 1725
 Thy sailors cheer'd,—“ Will you not seize what
 chance

Presents of arms ? one snatch a pole, and one
 A broken plank ; raise you your oars, and smite
 These hostile strangers ; crush their bleeding heads.”
 All started up, these bearing in their hands 1730
 The naval instruments, and those their swords.
 The vessel stream'd with blood ; and from the stern
 The voice of Helena to daring deeds
 Inflamed them :—“ Where your glory won at Troy ?
 Show it to these barbarians.” In their haste 1735
 Some fell, and those that stood thou soon might'st see
 Rolling in blood. But Menelaus, array'd
 In arms, observing his associate band
 Where most annoy'd, ran thither with his sword
 In his right hand, that leaping from the ship 1740
 Our sailors plunged into the sea, the oars
 Deserted by the rowers. To the helm
 The king then went, and bade them steer the bark
 To Greece : the mast was raised ; a favouring wind
 Arose ; and proudly from this land they sail. 1745
 Flying the carnage, I, the anchor near,
 Let myself down, and dropp'd into the sea :
 There as I struggled, from a fishing-boat
 One threw his line, and brought me safe to land,
 To tell thee this. Naught to man's welfare more
 Avails, than disbelief by prudence ruled. 1751

CHO. That Menelaus, here present, should escape
 Thy knowledge, king, and ours, was ne'er my
 thought.

THEOC. I am betray'd and ruin'd (wretched me !)

By woman's arts : my nuptials, my fond hopes, 1755
 Are lost. If by pursuit their flying bark
 Might be o'ertaken, I would spare no toil,
 But quickly seize the strangers. My revenge
 Shall now fall heavy on my sister's head :
 She hath deceived me ; in my house she saw 1760
 This Menelaus, and told me not ; her voice
 Henceforth shall ne'er deceive another man.

CHO. Ah, whither, to what slaughter dost thou
 haste ?

THEOC. Where Justice calls me ; but stand you
 away.

CHO. No ; on thy robes, my lord, I still will hang,
 For thou art hastening to prodigious ills. 1766

THEOC. Slave as thou art, wilt thou control thy
 lord ?

CHO. Yet is my purpose friendly.

THEOC. Not to me.

But let me go—

CHO. We will not let thee go.

THEOC. To slay my wicked sister.

CHO. Say not so. 1770

She is most holy.

THEOC. Hath she not betray'd me ?

CHO. With honour, doing thus a righteous deed.

THEOC. And to another given my bride ?

CHO. To one,

That hath a juster right.

THEOC. Who hath a right

O'er what is mine ?

CHO. He from her father's hand 1775

Who as his bride received her.

THEOC. But to me

Did Fortune give her.

CHO. And resistless Fate

Took her away.

THEOC. In my affairs to judge

Becomes not thee.

CHO. If honour prompts my words.

THEOC. I am a slave then here, it seems, not lord.

CHO. What she hath done is holy ; so I judge. 1781

THEOC. Thou seem'st to have an ardent wish to die.

CHO. Kill me : thy sister never shalt thou kill
With our consent. Kill me : to generous slaves
It is a glory for their lords to die. 1785

CASTOR AND POLLUX.

Restrain thy anger, Theoclymenus,
King of this land : it drives thee headlong on,
Beyond the bounds of right. The sons of Jove,
Whom Leda bore, with Helen, from thy house
Now fled, speak to thee. Rage inflames thy heart
For nuptials not allow'd thee by the Fates. 1791

The daughter of the Nereid, nymph divine,
Theonoe, thy sister, doth to thee
No wrong, the sacred councils of the gods
Revering, and her father's just commands : 1795

For in thy house right was it she should dwell
Ev'n to the present time : but since the towers
Of Troy are sunk in dust, and to the gods
Enough her name is lent, she ought not now
In these new nuptials to be held, but go 1800
To her own house, and with her husband live.

Keep thy sword sheathed, nor touch thy sister's life,
And think that prudence was in this her guide.
We would have saved our sister long ere this,
Since Jove hath made us gods, but we perforce 1805
Submitted to the stronger power of Fate,
And to those gods, whose will decreed that thus
These things should be. These words I speak to
thee.

Now to my sister I address my speech :—
Sail with thy husband ; you shall have a wind 1810
Favouring your voyage ; riding nigh the sea,
We, thy twin-brothers, will be guards to thee,
And guide thee to thy country. When thy course
Shall end, and thou shalt quit this mortal life,

Thou shalt be call'd a goddess, with the sons 1815
 Of Jove receive libations, and with us
 The honours share : such is the will of Jove.
 But where the son of Maia lodged thee first,
 When from the heavenly mansions he came down,
 From Sparta to convey thee, and to guard 1820
 Thy nuptial bed from Paris ; that strong isle,
 Stretch'd like a bulwark towards the Attic coast,
 In future ages shall from mortals bear
 The name of Helena, because it gave thee
 A refuge, from thy house in secret borne. 1825
 But to the wandering Menelaus the gods
 The island of the bless'd, by Fate's decree,
 Assign his mansion : for the immortal powers
 Look not with hatred on the generous spirit ;
 But to severer toils the ignoble doom. 1830

THEOC. Ye sons of Leda and of Jove, I cease
 My contest for your sister, nor 'gainst mine
 Will I unsheath my sword. Let her go home,
 If this be pleasing to the gods : and know,
 You have a sister, from the same high race 1835
 With you derived, the wisest and the best
 Of all her sex. Farewell, for Helen's sake,
 And for the sake of her most generous mind ;
 An excellence in woman seldom found.

CHO. With various hand the gods dispense our
 fates ; 1840
 Now showering various blessings, which our hopes
 Dared not aspire to ; now controlling ill
 We deem'd inevitable : thus the god
 To these hath given an end exceeding thought.
 Such is the fortune of this happy day. 1845

ELECTRA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

AUTURGUS.

ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

TUTOR.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

MESSSENGER.

CASTOR and POLLUX.

CHORUS of Mycenæan virgins.

ELECTRA.

ARGUMENT.

THE life of the infant Orestes is preserved from the machinations of his mother and her paramour by the vigilance of his sister Electra, who causes him to be privately intrusted to the care of Strophius, king of Phocis. This monarch treats him with the utmost tenderness, and educates him with his own son, Pylades; and hence an indissoluble friendship is formed between the young men. Arrived at years of maturity, Orestes determines to revenge his father's death; and, with this design, accompanied by Pylades, arrives in disguise at the court of Mycenæ, where he finds Electra, forcibly wedded to a peasant by the adulterous pair, dwelling in a sordid cottage, and compelled to the performance of menial offices. Here he is recognised by an old tutor, by whose advice he slays Ægisthus at a public sacrifice, and afterward stabs his mother at the instigation of Electra. No sooner, however, has he completed the horrid deed, than he is struck with remorse at the guilt which he has thereby contracted; when Castor and Pollux descend from the skies, and recommend him immediately to repair to Athens, seek the protection of Minerva, and expiate the murder of his mother by an acquittal at the court of Areopagus, after bestowing his sister in marriage on his friend Pylades.—[The scene is in the royal palace at Argos.]

AUTURGUS.

THOU ancient glory of this land, famed stream
Of Inachus, thou saw'st the mighty host,
When in a thousand ships to Phrygia's strand
The royal Agamemnon bore the war.

The Dardan monarch slain, the towers of Troy

And the proud city levell'd with the ground,
 To Argos he return'd, and many spoils,
 From the barbarians rent, triumphant fix'd
 In the high temples. There his toils were crown'd
 With conquest ; but by Clytemnestra's wiles, 10
 His wife, and by Ægisthus' murdering hand,
 Son of Thyestes, in his house he died ;
 Leaving the ancient sceptre, from the hands .
 Of Tantalus to him derived, he fell ;
 And now Ægisthus lords it o'er the land, 15
 His royal throne possessing, and his wife,
 Daughter of Tyndarus. He, when for Troy
 He sail'd, his son Orestes in his house
 And young Electra's budding beauties left.
 Orestes, by Ægisthus mark'd for death, 20
 The guardian of his father's youth by stealth
 To Strophius bore, that in the Phocian land
 He might protect him. In her father's house
 Remain'd Electra: her, when youth's warm bloom 24
 Glow'd on her cheek, the high-born chiefs of Greece
 In marriage sought: through fear lest she should
 bear
 To any Argive sons that might revenge
 The death of Agamemnon, in the house
 Ægisthus held her, and repulsed the suit
 Of every wooer. But his gloomy fears 30
 Still prompting that by stealth she might bear sons
 To one of noble lineage, he resolved
 To kill her ; but her mother, though her soul
 Was fierce and ruthless, saved her from his hands :
 She for her husband's murder had some plea 35
 To urge, but dreaded from her children's blood
 Public abhorrence. Then Ægisthus framed
 These villanous designs ; he offer'd gold,
 The son of Agamemnon, from this land
 Escaped, whome'er would kill : to me espoused 40
 He gives Electra. From Mycenæ sprung
 My parents ; thus far no reproach is mine ;
 My race illustrious, but not bless'd with wealth ;

And poverty obscures my noble birth :
 To one thus sunk he gave her, that his fears 45
 Might likewise sink ; for should she wed a man
 Whose high rank gives him lustre, he might rouse
 The murder of her father, sleeping now,
 And vengeance then might on Ægisthus fall.
 Yet, Venus be my witness, by my touch 50
 She hath not been dishonour'd : she is still
 A virgin : in my humble state I scorn
 Such insult to the daughters of the great.
 I grieve too for Orestes, hapless youth,
 To me in words allied, should he return 55
 To Argos, and behold his sister placed
 In marriage so unworthy of her birth.
 This some may deem a folly, to receive
 A virgin in my house, and touch her not :
 But let such know, that by distorted rules 60
 They measure continence, themselves depraved.

ELECTRA, AUTURGUS.

ELEC. O dark-brow'd Night, nurse of the golden
 stars,
 In thee, this vase sustaining on my head,
 I to the flowing river bend my steps
 (Not by necessity to this compell'd, 65
 But to the gods to show the insolent wrongs
 I suffer from Ægisthus), and my griefs
 For my lost father to the wide extent
 Of ether breathe : for from the royal house
 Me my destructive mother hath driven forth, 70
 To gratify her husband : having borne
 To Ægisthus other children, she hath made
 Me and Orestes outcasts from the house.
 AUT. Why wilt thou thus, unhappy lady, toil,
 For my sake bearing labours, nor desist 75
 At my desire ? Not thus hast thou been train'd.
 ELEC. Thee equal to the gods I deem my friend ;
 For in my ills thou hast not treated me
 With insult. In misfortunes thus to find,

What I have found in thee, a gentle power 80
 Lenient of grief, must be a mighty source
 Of consolation. It behooves me then,
 Far as my power avails, to ease thy toils,
 That lighter thou mayst feel them, and to share
 Thy labour, though unbidden : in the fields 85
 Thou hast enough of work ; be it my task
 Within to order well. The labourer, tired
 Abroad, with pleasure to his house returns,
 Accustom'd all things grateful there to find.

AUT. Go, then, since such thy will : nor distant
 far 90

The fountain from the house. At the first dawn
 My bullocks yoked I to the field will drive,
 And sow my furrows : for no idle wretch,
 With the gods always in his mouth, can gain,
 Without due labour, the support of life. 95

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORES. O Pylades, thee first of all mankind
 Faithful and friendly I esteem ; alone
 Hast thou received Orestes, held me high
 In thy dear love, thus with misfortunes press'd,
 And suffering, as I suffer, dreadful ills, 100
 Wrought by Ægisthus, whose accursed hand
 (And my destructive mother join'd her aid)
 Murder'd my father. But the Argive soil,
 Commanded by the god's oracular voice,
 No mortal conscious to my steps, I tread, 105
 His murder on his murderers to avenge.
 This night my father's tomb have I approach'd,
 Pour'd the warm tear, presented my shorn locks,
 And offer'd on the pyre the victim's blood,
 Secret from those who lord it o'er this land. 110
 The walls I enter not ; a double charge
 At once emprising, to the Argive bounds
 I come, that by the tyrant's spies, if known,
 I to another's realms may soon retire,
 And seek my sister ; for they say that here 115

In marriage join'd she dwells, a virgin now
 No more : with her I would hold converse, her
 Take my associate in this deed, and learn
 All that hath pass'd within the walls. But now
 (For now the gray morn opes her radiant eye) 120
 Retire we from this public path : perchance
 Some ploughman, or some female slave, from whom
 We may gain knowledge, may in sight appear.
 And see, a female slave, her tresses shorn,
 Bears from the spring her vase : sit we awhile, 125
 And question her, if haply from her words
 We may learn aught for which we hither came.

ELECTRA.

STROPHE.

Begin, begin, for this the hour
 The mournful measures weeping pour.
 Is there a wretch like me on earth ? 130
 The royal Agamemnon gave me birth,
 My mother Clytemnestra, shame
 Fall on that odious name !
 And me each tongue within Mycenæ's walls
 The unhappy, lost Electra calls. 135
 My soul to grief a prey,
 My hated life in anguish wastes away :
 My tears for thee, my father, flow ;
 For in the shades below,
 By cursed Ægisthus and his barbarous wife 140
 (Ah me, ah me, my miseries !)
 Basely deprived of life,
 The royal Agamemnon lies.
 Yet once more raise the tearful strain,
 The sweetly-mournful measures sooth my pain. 145

ANTISTROPHE.

Begin, begin, for this the hour ;
 The mournful members weeping pour.
 Unhappy brother, in what state,
 What house is cruel servitude thy fate :

Thy sister, in those rooms confined, 150
 Once by her sire assign'd
 The chaste retirement of her happier years,—
 Thy wretched sister left to tears,
 Tears which incessant flow
 From the deep anguish of severest wo? 155
 O, mayst thou come (O Jove, O Jove,
 Hear from thy throne above!)
 To sooth the pangs my tortured heart that rend:
 To avenge thy father basely slain,
 Mayst thou to Argos bend 160
 Thy weary, wandering foot again.—
 Take from my head this vase, that high
 May swell the mournful nightly melody.—

ÉPODE.

The dismal song, the song of death,
 To thee, my father, will I raise, 165
 To thee among the shades beneath:
 So pass my mournful days.
 For thee my bleeding breast I tear,
 And beat my head, and rend my hair,
 Shorn as an offering to the dead: 170
 Yes, poor Electra, beat thy head.
 As some broad rolling stream along,
 For his lost father torn away,
 Caught in the wily net a prey,
 The tuneful cygnet pours the song; 175
 So thee, my father, I lament,
 In thy last bath deprived of breath,
 Stretch'd on the bed of death:
 So I deplore the cursed intent
 Form'd 'gainst thy sad return from Troy, 180
 The keen axe furious to destroy.
 For thee no crown thy wife design'd,
 No festive wreath thy brows to bind,
 But the relentless, trenchant sword;
 And, by her raging passions led, 185
 Aids the base murderer's deed abhorr'd,
 Then takes him to her bed.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Daughter of Agamemnon, I with speed,
 Electra, to thy rustic cottage fly:
 For one, whose herds on these rude mountains feed,
 A swain, on whose good faith we firm rely, 191
 Came, from Mycenæ came;
 The Argives (thus he says) proclaim
 Three days of festal rites divine,
 And all the virgins haste to Juno's shrine. 195

ELECTRA.

STROPHE II.

No more, my friends, the gorgeous vest,
 Which in her happier hours Electra graced;
 No more the gem, in gold enchased,
 With vivid radiance sparkling on my breast,
 Delight my mind: my feet no more 200
 The mazy-winding dance shall tread;
 No more the train of Argive virgins lead.
 In tears, ah me! I melt away;
 In tears, sad solace of each wretched day.
 My ceaseless miseries I deplore; 205
 My sordid toils these locks defile;
 Around me see these vestments vile:
 Of Agamemnon's daughter this the fate?
 Where now my father's royal state?
 Where the proud glories of his name, 210
 And Troy recording sad her conqueror's mighty
 fame?

CHORUS.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Great is the goddess: go then, with us go;
 Receive whate'er thy beauties may improve;
 The gold, the vests with various dies that glow.
 Think'st thou with tears the unhonour'd gods to
 move? 215

Not won by sighs their aid,
 But by pure vows with reverence paid,
 The gods, to crush thy foes, will send,
 And blessings on thy future days to attend.

ELECTRA.

ANTISTROPHE II.

My cries, my vows no god will hear, 220
 Nor heeded they my father's spouting gore.
 Ah me! the murder'd I deplore,
 And for the living exile pour the tear:
 He, distant from his native land,
 Wanders, poor outcast, o'er the earth, 225
 And seeks mean refuge at some servile hearth,
 Dragging from realm to realm his woes,
 Though in his veins the blood of monarchs flows.
 I, by oppression's iron hand
 Driven from my father's royal seat, 230
 Dwell in this low obscure retreat,
 Here waste in toils my wretched life away,
 Or o'er the rugged mountains stray:
 While, glorying in her impious deeds,
 My mother to her bed the blood-stain'd murderer
 leads. 235

CHO. The sister of thy mother, Helena,
 Hath been the cause of many ills to Greece,
 And to thy house.

ELEC. Ah me! ye female train,
 My measures I break off: some strangers, lodged
 Nigh to the cottage, from their ambush rise. 240
 Fly by the path; I to the house will fly:
 Let us be swift to escape their ruffian hands.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. Stay, thou unhappy; fear not aught from me.
 ELEC. Thee, Phœbus, that I die not, I implore.
 ORES. Others more hated would I rather kill. 245

ELEC. Away, nor touch one whom thou ought'st
not touch.

ORES. There is not whom more justly I may touch.

ELEC. Why with thy sword in ambush near my
house?

ORES. Stay, hear; not vain thy stay thou soon
shalt own.

ELEC. I stay; the stronger thou, I in thy power.

ORES. Bearing thy brother's words to thee I come.

ELEC. Most welcome: breathes he yet this vital
air? 252

ORES. He lives: I first would speak what brings
thee joy.

ELEC. Oh be thou bless'd for these most grateful
words!

ORES. To both in common this I give to share. 255

ELEC. Where is the unhappy outcast wandering
now?

ORES. He wastes his life not subject to one state.

ELEC. Finds he with toil what life each day re-
quires?

ORES. Not so; but mean the wandering exile's
state.

ELEC. But with what message art thou from him
charged? 260

ORES. To inquire, if living, where thou bear'st thy
griefs.

ELEC. First, then, observe my thin and wasted
state.

ORES. Wasted with grief, so that I pity thee. 263

ELEC. Behold my head, its crisped honours shorn.

ORES. Mourning thy brother, or thy father dead?

ELEC. What can be dearer to my soul than these?

ORES. Alas! What deem'st thou are thy brother's
thoughts?

ELEC. He, though far distant, is most dear to me.

ORES. Why here thy dwelling, from the city far?

ELEC. O stranger, in base nuptials I am join'd. 270

ORES. I feel thy brother's grief: to one of rank?

- ELEC. Not as my father once to place me hoped.
 ORES. That hearing I may tell thy brother, speak.
 ELEC. This is his house: in this I dwell remote.
 ORES. This house some digger, or some herdsman
 suits. 275
 ELEC. Generous, though poor, in reverence me he
 holds.
 ORES. To thee what reverence doth thy husband
 pay?
 ELEC. He never hath presumed to approach my
 bed.
 ORES. Through sacred chastity, or from disdain?
 ELEC. Scorning my noble parents to disgrace. 280
 ORES. How in such nuptial feels he not a pride?
 ELEC. Him, who affied me, not my lord he deems.
 ORES. Thinking Orestes might revenge the wrong?
 ELEC. This too he fears; yet modest is his mind.
 ORES. A generous man, and one who merits much.
 ELEC. If to his house the absent e'er returns. 286
 ORES. But this debasement could thy mother
 brook?
 ELEC. Their husbands, not their children, wives
 regard.
 ORES. Why did Ægisthus offer this base wrong?
 ELEC. Thus placing me, he wish'd my children
 weak. 290
 ORES. That from thee no avengers might arise.
 ELEC. For this design may vengeance on him fall!
 ORES. That yet thou art a virgin doth he know?
 ELEC. He knows it not: this undisclosed we hold.
 ORES. Are these, who hear us, faithful, and thy
 friends? 295
 ELEC. Never thy words or mine will they disclose.
 ORES. What should Orestes do, if he return?
 ELEC. Canst thou ask this? How base! The
 time now calls—
 ORES. But how thy father's murderers should he
 slay?

ELEC. Daring to do what they, who slew him,
dared. 300

ORES. Couldst thou, with him, thy mother bear to
kill?

ELEC. With the same axe, by which my father fell.

ORES. This may I tell him, and thy soul resolved?

ELEC. My mother's blood first shedding, might I
die!

ORES. O, were Orestes nigh, to hear these words!

ELEC. If seen, I should not know him, stranger,
now. 306

ORES. No wonder, for when parted both were
young.

ELEC. Nor by my friends, save one, would he be
known.

ORES. Who bore him, as they say, by stealth from
death?

ELEC. The aged guardian of my father's youth. 310

ORES. Was thy dead father honour'd with a tomb?

ELEC. As he was honour'd, from the house cast
forth.

ORES. Alas, the barbarous deed! A sense of ills,
Which strangers suffer, wounds the human heart.

But speak, that to thy brother I may bear, 315

By thee inform'd, words which perchance may
wound

His ear, but which concerns him much to know.

Those who have knowledge feel the tender touch

Of pity, not the unknowing: yet to know

Too much, is oft the bitter source of grief. 320

CHO. My soul is with the same desire inflamed;

For from the city distant, naught I know

Of the ills there; I wish to be inform'd.

ELEC. I would speak, if I might; and to a friend
May I not speak my suffering father's wrongs, 325

And mine? But, stranger, since to this discourse

Thou dost enforce me, I conjure thee tell

Orestes his calamities, and mine:

Tell him in what mean garb thou seest me clad,

How sordid, and beneath what lowly roof, 330
 Born as I was to royalty, I lodge.
 I, labouring at the loom the lengthen'd robe,
 Shall want the vest to clothe my nakedness ;
 And, bearing water from the flowing fount,
 No more partaker of the feast, no more 335
 Myself a virgin, mid the virgin train
 Leading the dance, to them I bid adieu,
 To Castor also bid adieu, to whom,
 Ere to the gods advanced, I was betrothed,
 As from the same illustrious lineage sprung. 340
 Meantime my mother mid the Phrygian spoils
 Sits on her throne ; the Asiatic dames,
 Made by my father's conquest slaves, attend
 Her state, their rich Idæan vests confined
 With clasps of gold, my father's clotted gore 345
 Yet putrid in the house ; and the same car,
 In which my father rode, his murderer mounts ;
 The sceptre, ensign of his kingly sway
 O'er Greece in arms confederate, he with pride
 Grasps in his bloody hands. The monarch's tomb,
 Unhonoured, nor libations hath received, 351
 Nor myrtle bough ; no hallow'd ornament
 Hath dignified the pyre : inflamed with wine,
 My mother's husband (the illustrious lord,
 For so they call him) tramples on the earth 355
 Insultingly where Agamemnon lies ;
 And, hurling 'gainst his monument a stone,
 Thus taunts us with proud scorn:—" Where is thy
 son,
 Orestes where ? right noble is thy tomb
 Protected by his presence." Thus he mocks 360
 The absent : but, O stranger, tell him this,
 Suppliant I beg thee. Many give the charge,
 And I interpret it ; my hands, my tongue,
 My mind desponding with its grief, my head
 Shorn of its tresses, and his father. Shame, 365
 Base shame it were, if, when his father's arm
 Subdued the Trojans, he should want the power

Alone to hurl his vengeance on one man,
Now in youth's prime, and from a nobler sire.

CHO. But see, the man, thy husband, to his toils
Giving a respite, hastens to his house. 371

AUTURGUS, ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

AUT. Ha! who these strangers, whom before my
doors

I see? Why come they to these rustic gates?
Of me aught want they? With young men to stand
Abroad, a woman's honour ill beseems. 375

ELEC. Thou faithful friend, let no suspicion touch
Thy mind: their converse truly shalt thou know.
These, by Orestes charged, are come to me.
Strangers, forgive what he hath said amiss.

AUT. What say they? Lives he? Is he yet a
man?

ELEC. He lives, they say, and speak what wins my
faith. 381

AUT. Remembers he his father, and thy wrongs?

ELEC. This lives in hope: an exile's state is weak.

AUT. What from Orestes come they to relate?

ELEC. He sent them secret to observe my ills. 385

AUT. Some they behold, and some thou may'st
relate.

ELEC. They know them, of each circumstance in-
form'd.

AUT. Then long ago my lowly doors to them
Should have been open'd. Enter ye the house;
And for your welcome tidings you shall share 390
Such hospitable viands as the stores

Of my poor mansion yield. You, who attend,
What for their journey needful they have brought
Bear in: nor you refuse; for you are come
Friends to a friendly man: poor though I am, 395
A sordid spirit never will I show.

ORES. Now by the gods, is this the man, who
holds

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Thy marriage in such holy reverence,
Scorning to do Orestes shameful wrong ? 399

ELEC. The poor Electra's husband this is call'd.

ORES. Nature hath given no outward mark to note
The generous mind: the qualities of men
To sense are indistinct. I oft have seen
One of no worth a noble father shame,
And from vile parents worthy children spring ; 405
Meanness oft grovelling in the rich man's mind,
And oft exalted spirits in the poor.

How then discerning shall we judge aright ?
By riches ? ill would they abide the test :
By poverty ? on poverty awaits 410

This ill, through want it prompts to sordid deeds :
Shall we pronounce by arms ? but who can judge,
By looking on the spear, the dauntless heart ?
Such judgment is fallacious : for this man,
Nor great among the Argives, nor elate 415

With the proud honours of his house, his rank
Plebeian, hath approved his liberal heart.
Will you not then learn wisdom, you whose minds
Error with false presentments leads astray ?

Will you not learn by manners and by deeds 420
To judge the noble ? Such discharge their trust
With honour to the state, and to their house :

Mere flesh, without a spirit, is no more
Than statues in the forum : nor in war
Doth the strong arm the dangerous shock abide 425

More than the weak : on nature this depends,
And an intrepid mind. But we accept
Thy hospitable kindness ; for the son

Of Agamemnon, for whose sake we come,
Present or not, is worthy : to this house 430
Go, my attendants ; I must enter it :

This man, though poor, more cheerful than the rich
Receives me ; to his kindness thanks are due.

More would it joy me if thy brother, bless'd
Himself, could lead me to his prosperous house ; 435
Yet haply he may come ; the oracular voice

Of Phœbus firmly will be ratified :
Lightly of human prophecies I deem.

[*Orestes and his attendants enter the house.*]

CHŌ. Ne'er till this hour, Electra, were our hearts
So warm'd with joy : for Fortune now, perchance,
Though slow in her advance, may firmly stand. 441

ELEC. Why, thou unhappy, of thy humble house
Knowing the penury, wouldst thou receive
Such guests, of rank superior to thy own ?

AUT. Why not ? If they are noble, so their port
Denotes them, will they not alike enjoy 446
Contentment, be their viands mean or rich ?

ELEC. Since thou hast done what suits not thy low
state,

To my loved father's aged guardian go ;
He near the river Tanus, which divides 450

The realms of Argos from the Spartan land,

An outcast from the city, leads his herds :

Entreat him to attend thee to thy house,

Supplying what may entertain thy guests.

He will rejoice, presenting to the gods 455

His vows, when he shall hear the son, preserved

By him, yet lives : for from my father's house

We from my mother nothing should receive ;

And bitter were the tidings, should she learn 459

(What most would grieve her) that Orestes lives.

AUT. These words, since such thy pleasure, I will
bear

To the old man. But enter thou the house
With speed, and all things set in order there :

For many things a woman, be her thoughts

Intent, may find to form the grateful feast : 465

And in the house such plenty yet remains,

As for one day may well supply their wants.

Yet on such subjects when my thoughts are turn'd,

I deem of wealth as having mighty power

To give the stranger welcome, and to aid 470

The body when afflicted with disease ;

But of small moment to the daily food

Which Nature craves: for to supply her wants,
An equal measure serves the rich and poor.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Ye gallant ships, that o'er the main 475
Rush'd with innumerable oars,
Dancing amid the Nereid train
To Troy's detested shores;
Your dark-beak'd prows, while wanton round
The pipe-enamour'd dolphins bound, 486
The son of Thetis pleased to guide,
Achilles, leaping on the strand
(With Agamemnon's martial band)
Where Simois rolls his tide.

ANTISTROPHE I.

The Nereids left the Eubœan shore, 481
And arms divinely bright
For Vulcan's golden anvils bore:
O'er Pelion's rocky height,
O'er sacred Ossa's wood-crown'd brow,
Which shows the nymphs the plain below, 490
They pass'd, the warlike father where
The heroic son of Thetis bred,
The pride of Greece, by glory led
The Atridæ's toils to share.

STROPHE II.

One, who the spoils of Troy had shared, 495
I saw in Nauplia's port, and raptur'd hung,

480 The dolphins were thought by the ancients to be delighted with music: hence the poet describes them as gambolling around the Grecian ships, whose oars kept stroke to the tune of flutes.

482 An oracle had declared, that whoever of the Grecians should with his feet first touch the Trojan strand, should first be slain. Achilles, to encourage the troops to land, threw his shield on the shore, and leaped out of his ship on it: this was the suggestion of Ulysses: immediately Pretesilaus leaped on the strand; and as he was the first that touched it with his feet, he was the first slain.

O son of Thetis, on his tongue,
 While he the glories of thy shield declared ;
 On its bright orb what figures rise,
 Terrific to the Phrygians' eyes : 500
 Grasping the Gorgon's head, the verge around,
 With waving wings his sandals bound ;
 A sculptured Perseus rises o'er the main :
 Protector of the pastured plain,
 Hermes, the messenger of Jove, 505
 Seems with the favour'd chief his golden wings to
 move.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Full in the midst, the orb of day,
 In all its radiance, blazes through the sky ;
 The fiery coursers seem to fly :
 And, silent rolling o'er the ethereal way, 510
 The stars refulgent through the night,
 To Hector's eyes a dreadful sight,
 High on the helmet sphinxes glow in gold,
 Who, while their prey their talons hold,
 In triumph seem their barbarous song to pour. 515
 The richly burnish'd hauberk o'er,
 Breathing fierce flames, with horrid speed
 The dire Chimæra springs to seize Pirene's steed.

EPODE.

Dreadful the blood-stain'd spear ; the car
 Four coursers whirl amid the war ; 520
 Behind them clouds of dust black rising roll.
 Such martial chiefs the monarch led ;
 Yet by a hand accursed he bled,
 By his wife's hand : her noble blood
 From the rich streams of Tyndarus flow'd, 525
 But deeds of horror darken on her soul.
 Yet may the gods' avenging power
 On thee their righteous fury shower ;

503 Perseus is generally described with wings on his helmet and sandals ; these he received from Mercury, who concurred with Jupiter and Minerva in protecting this hero, and is here his attendant.

Yet may thy neck the falchion wound ;
 Yet may I see thy blood distain the ground ! 530

OLD TUTOR, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

TUT. Where is my honour'd mistress, my loved
 child,
 Daughter of Agamemnon, once my charge ?
 Steep to her house and difficult the ascent ;
 With pain my age-enfeebled feet advance ;
 Yet labouring onward, with bent knees I move 535
 To seek my friends. O daughter (for mine eyes
 Before the house behold thee), I am come,
 Bringing this tender youngling from my fold ;
 These garlands ; from the vases these fresh curds,
 And this small flask of old and treasured wine 540
 Of grateful odour : scanty the supply ;
 Yet, with aught weaker if allay'd, the cup
 Will yield a grateful beverage. Let one bear
 Into the house these presents for thy guests :
 I, with these tatter'd vests, meanwhile will wipe 545
 Mine eyes, for they are wet with gushing tears.

ELEC. Why, good old man, thus wet thy tearful
 eyes ?
 After this lapse of time, dost thou recall
 The memory of my ills ? or mourn the flight
 Of poor Orestes, or my father's fate, 550
 Whom, in thy hands sustaining, once thy care
 Nurtured, to thee and to thy friends in vain ?

TUT. In vain : but this my soul could not support ;
 For to his tomb, as on the way I came,
 I turn'd aside, and, falling on the ground, 555
 Alone and unobserved, indulged my tears ;
 Then of the wine, brought for thy stranger guests,
 Made a libation, and around the tomb
 Placed myrtle branches ; on the pyre I saw
 A sable ewe, yet fresh the victim's blood, 560
 And clustering auburn locks shorn from some head :
 I marvell'd, O my child ! what man had dared
 Approach the tomb, for this no Argive dares :

Perchance with secret step thy brother came,
 And paid these honours to his father's tomb. 565
 But view these locks, compare them with thine own,
 Whether like thine their colour: Nature loves
 In those, who from one father draw their blood,
 In many points a likeness to preserve.

ELEC. Unworthy of a wise man are thy words, 570
 If thou canst think that to Mycenæ's realms
 My brother e'er with secret step will come,
 Fearing Ægisthus: then between our locks
 What can the agreement be? To manly toils
 He in the rough palæstra hath been train'd, 575
 Mine by the comb are soften'd; so that hence
 Nothing may be inferr'd: besides, old man,
 Tresses like-colour'd often mayst thou find,
 Where not one drop of kindred blood is shared.

TUT. Trace but his footsteps, mark the impres-
 sion, see 580
 If of the same dimensions with thy feet.

ELEC. How can the impression of his foot be left
 On hard and rocky ground? But were it so,
 Brother and sister never can have foot
 Of like dimensions: larger is the man's. 585

TUT. But hath thy brother, should he come, no
 vest
 Which thou wouldst know, the texture of thy hands,
 In which, when snatch'd from death, he was array'd?

ELEC. Know'st thou not, when my brother from
 this land
 Was saved, I was but young? But were his vests
 Wrought by my hands, then infant as he was, 591
 How could he now, in his maturer age,
 Be in the same array'd, unless his vests
 Grew with his person's growth? No: at the tomb
 Some stranger, touch'd with pity, shear'd his locks,
 Or native, by the tyrant's spies unmark'd. 596

TUT. Where are these strangers? I would see
 them: much
 Touching thy brother wish I to inquire.

ELEC. See, from the house with hastening step
they come.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, TUTOR, CHORUS.

TUT. Their port is noble ; but the exterior form
Oft cheats the eye : many of noble port 601
Are base ; yet will I bid the strangers hail.

ORES. Hail, hoary sire ! Electra, of what friend
Doth chance present us the revered remains ?

ELEC. The guardian, strangers, of my father's
youth. 605

ORES. Is this the man who bore thy brother hence ?

ELEC. The man who saved him this, if yet he
lives.

ORES. Why doth he scan me with that curious eye,
As if inspecting some bright impress mark'd
On silver ? Some resemblance doth he trace ? 610

ELEC. In thee he pleased may mark my brother's
years.

ORES. A much-loved man. Why wheels he round
me thus ?

ELEC. I too am struck with wonder, seeing this.

TUT. My dear, my honour'd child, address the
gods.

ELEC. For what ? some absent, or some present
good ? 615

TUT. To hold the treasure, which the god pre-
sents.

ELEC. See, I address the gods : what wouldst thou
say ?

TUT. Look now on him, my child, that dearest
youth.

ELEC. I fear'd before thy senses were not sound.

TUT. My sense not sound, when I Orestes see ?

ELEC. Why speakest thou what all my hopes ex-
ceeds ? 621

TUT. In him beholding Agamemnon's son.

ELEC. What mark hast thou observed, to win my
faith ?

TUT. That scar above his eyebrow, from a fall
Imprinted deep, as in his father's house, 625
He long ago, with thee, pursued a hind.

ELEC. I see the mark remaining from his fall.

TUT. Why the most dear delay'st thou yet to embrace ?

ELEC. No longer now will I delay : the marks
By thee discover'd are persuasive proofs. 630
O thou at length return'd, beyond my hopes
Thus I embrace thee.

ORES. And my arms at last
Thus fondly clasp thee.

ELEC. This I never thought :

ORES. Nor could I hope it.

ELEC. Art thou he indeed ?

ORES. Alone to thee, in firm alliance join'd, 635
If well this net, my present task, I draw.

ELEC. I am assured ; or never must we more
Believe that there are gods, if impious wrongs
Triumphant over justice bear the sway.

CHORUS.

Yes, thou art come, O lingering day, 640
At length art come, and, beaming bright,
Show'st to Mycenæ's state his glorious light,
Who, from his father's palace chased,
A wretched wanderer long disgraced,
Cheers us with his returning ray. 645

Some god, some god, my royal friend,
Back our own radiant Victory leads :

Raise then thy hands, and to the skies

Let for thy brother suppliant vows arise ;

That, as with daring foot he treads, 650

Success, success may on his steps attend.

ORES. So may it be. With joy thy dear embrace
I now receive : at length the time will come
When it shall be repeated. But, old man
(For opportune thy coming), tell me now 655

What I shall do on the base murderer's head,
 And on my mother's, who impurely shares
 His nuptial bed, to avenge my father's death.
 Have I no friend at Argos? not one left
 Benevolent? are, with my fortunes, all 660
 Entirely lost? to whom shall I apply?
 Doth the night suit my purpose, or the day?
 Or which way shall I turn against my foes?

TUT. Amid thy ruin'd fortunes, O my son,
 Thou hast no friend. Where shall the man be
 found 665

Prompt in a prosperous or an adverse state
 Alike to share? But learn this truth from me
 (For of thy friends thou wholly art bereft,
 Nor doth ev'n hope remain); in thine own hand
 Now, and in fortune, thou hast all wherewith 670
 To gain thy father's house and regal state.

ORES. What shall we do to effect this glorious
 end?

TUT. Ægisthus and thy mother thou must kill.

ORES. For that I come: but how obtain that
 crown?

TUT. Thou canst not enter, if thou wouldst, the
 walls. 675

ORES. With guards defended, and with spear-arm'd
 hands?

TUT. Ay; for he fears thee, nor untroubled sleeps.

ORES. Well; let thine age some counsel then im-
 part.

TUT. Hear me: this now hath to my thought oc-
 curr'd.

ORES. Mayst thou point out, and I perceive some
 good! 680

TUT. I saw Ægisthus, hither as I came.

ORES. I am attentive to thee: in what place?

TUT. Near to those meadows, where his coursers
 feed.

ORES. What doing? Hope arises from despair.

TUT. A feast, it seems, preparing to the Nymphs.

ORES. Grateful for children born, or vows for
more? 686

TUT. I know but this, the victims were prepared.

ORES. With him what men? Or with his slaves
alone?

TUT. No Argive there, but his domestic train.

ORES. Is there who would discover me, if seen?

TUT. No; these are slaves who never saw thy
face. 691

ORES. To me, if I prevail, they might be friends.

TUT. Such the slave's nature: but this favours
thee.

ORES. How to his person near shall I approach?

TUT. Beneath his eye pass when the victims
bleed,— 695

ORES. That way, it seems, some pastured fields
are his.

TUT. That he may call thee to partake the feast.

ORES. A bitter guest, if so it please the gods.

TUT. Then, as the occasion points, thy measures
form.

ORES. Well hast thou said. But where my mo-
ther now? 700

TUT. At Argos; but the feast she soon will grace.

ORES. Why not together with her husband come?

TUT. Dreading the people's just reproach, she
stay'd.

ORES. She knows then the suspicions of the state?

TUT. She does: the impious woman all abhor. 705

ORES. How then together shall I slay them both?

ELEC. I will form measures for my mother's
death.

ORES. Fortune shall guide them to a good event.

ELEC. May she in this be aiding to us both!

ORES. It shall be so: but what dost thou devise?

ELEC. To Clytemnestra go, old man, and say, 711
To a male child Electra hath given birth.

TUT. That she long since, or lately bore this
child?

ELEC. Tell her the days require the lustral rites

ORES. And how thy mother's death doth this effect? 715

ELEC. Hearing my child-bed illness, she will come.

TUT. She hath no tenderness for thee, my child.

ELEC. Nay, my parturient honours she will weep.

TUT. Perchance she may : but brief thy purpose speak.

ELEC. Death, certain death, awaits her, if she comes. 720

TUT. Within these gates then let her set her feet.

ELEC. Soon to the gates of Pluto shall she turn.

TUT. Might I see this, with pleasure I would die.

ELEC. First then, old man, conduct him to the place ;—

TUT. The hallow'd victims where Ægisthus slays ?

ELEC. Then meet my mother, and relate my words. 726

TUT. That she shall think them utter'd by thy lips.

ELEC. Now is thy task : by thee he first must bleed. [to Orestes.

ORES. Had I a guide, this instant would I go.

TUT. Thy steps with ready zeal I will direct. 730

ORES. God of my country, god of vengeance, Jove,

O, pity us ! our sufferings pity claim.

ELEC. Pity us, for our race from thee we draw !

ORES. And thou, whose altars at Mycenæ blaze, Imperial Juno, give us victory, 735

If in a righteous cause we ask thy aid !

ELEC. O, give us to avenge our father's death !

ORES. And thou, my father, who beneath the earth

Hast thy dark dwelling, through unholy deeds
(And thou, O Earth, to whom I stretch my hands,
Great queen), protect thy children, O protect 741
Thy most dear children : come, and with thee bring,
To aid our cause, each mighty dead, that shook .

The spear with thee, and with thee conquer'd Troy !
 Hear'st thou, so foully by my mother wrong'd ; 745
 And all, the impious murderers who abhor ?

ELEC. All this, I know, my father hears ; but now
 The time demands thee : go ; by thy bold hand,
 I charge thee, let the vile Ægisthus die,
 For in the fatal contest shouldst thou fall, 750
 My life too ends ; nor say thou that I live,
 For I will plunge the sword into my throat.
 This go I to prepare. If glad report
 Of thy success arrive, then all the house
 Shall echo to my joy ; but shouldst thou die, 755
 All otherwise. Thou hear'st what I resolve.

ORES. I know it all.

ELEC. In this behooves thee much
 To be a man.—Ye women, let your voice
 Give signal, like a flaming beacon, how
 The contest ends : I will keep watch within. 760
 Holding the keen sword ready in my hands ;
 For never shall my body from my foes,
 If I must fall, indecent outrage bear.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

The Argive mountains round,
 'Mong tales of ancient days, 765
 From age to age recorded this remains
 Tuned to mellifluous lays,
 Pan taught his pipe to sound ;
 And as he breathed the sprightly-swelling strains,
 The beauteous ram with fleece of gold, 770
 God of shepherds on he drove.

The herald from the rock above
 Proclaims,—“ Your monarch's wonders to behold,
 Wonders to sight, from which no terrors flow,
 Go, Mycenæans, to the assembly go.” 775

With reverence they obey the call,
 And fill the Atridæ's spacious hall.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Its gates with gold o'erlaid
 Wide oped each Argive shrine,
 And from the altars hallow'd flames arise ; 780
 Amid the rites divine,
 Joying the Muse to aid,
 Breathed the brisk pipe its sweet notes to the skies ;
 Accordant to the tuneful strain
 Swell'd the loud-acclaiming voice, 785
 Now with Thyestes to rejoice :
 He, all on fire the glorious prize to gain,
 With secret love the wife of Atreus won,
 And thus the shining wonder made his own ;
 Then to the assembly vaunting cried, 790
 " Mine is the rich ram's golden pride."

STROPHE II.

Then, O then, indignant Jove
 Bade the bright sun backward move,
 And the golden orb of day,
 And the morning's orient ray : 795
 Glaring o'er the western sky
 Hurl'd his ruddy lightnings fly :
 Clouds, no more to fall in rain,
 Northward roll their deepening train :
 Libyan Ammon's thirsty seat, 800
 Wither'd with the scorching heat,
 Feels nor showers nor heavenly dews
 Grateful moisture round diffuse.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Fame hath said (but light I hold
 What the voice of Fame hath told) 805

786 Atreus and Thyestes, on the decease of their father Pelops, contended for the succession : at length they agreed that the regal power should devolve on him who could show something miraculous to the people. Atreus among his flocks had a ram, whose fleece was of gold : this Thyestes fraudulently obtained, by corrupting Aerope, his brother's wife ; and showing it to the people as something miraculous, claimed the sovereignty.

That the sun, retiring far,
 Backward roll'd his golden car,
 And his vital heat withdrew,
 Sickening man's bold crimes to view.
 Mortals, when such tales they hear, 810
 Tremble with a holy fear,
 And the offended gods adore :
 She, this noble pair who bore,
 Dared to murder (deed abhorr'd !)
 This forgot, her royal lord. 815

CHO. Ah me, ah me ! Heard you a noise, my
 friends ?

Or doth imagination startle me
 With vain alarms ? Not indistinct the sounds,
 Like Jove's low-muttering thunder, roll along.
 Come from the house, revered Electra, come. 820

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. What hath befallen, my friends ? what dan-
 ger comes ?

CHO. This only know I, death is in that noise.

ELEC. I heard it, distant, yet it reach'd my ear.

CHO. The sound comes rolling from afar, yet plain.

ELEC. Comes from an Argive, or my friends, the
 groan ? 825

CHO. I know not ; for confused the voices rise.

ELEC. This must to me be death : why then delay ?

CHO. Forbear ; that clear thou mayst thy fortunes
 know.

ELEC. No ; we are vanquish'd : none with tidings
 comes.

CHO. They will : not light to effect a monarch's
 death. 830

MESSENGER, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

MES. To you, ye virgins of Mycenæ, joy
 I bring, to all his friends my message speaks :
 Orestes is victorious ; on the ground,

Ægisthus, Agamemnon's murderer, lies :

Behooves you then address the immortal gods. 835

ELEC. And who art thou ? How wilt thou prove thy truth ?

MES. Thy brother's servant know'st thou not in me ?

ELEC. O thou most welcome, through my fears I scarce

Distinguish'd thee : I recognise thee now.

What, is my father's hated murderer dead ? 840

MES. Twice, what thou wishest, I his death announce.

CHO. All-seeing Justice, thou at length art come.

ELEC. What was the manner of his death ? How fell

This vile son of Thyestes ? I would know.

MES. Departing from this house, the level road

We enter'd soon, mark'd by the chariot-wheel 846

On either side. Mycenæ's noble king

Was there, amid his gardens, with fresh streams

Irriguous, walking, and the tender boughs

Of myrtles, for a wreath to bind his head, 850

He cropp'd : he saw us, he address'd us thus

Aloud :—" Hail, strangers : who are ye, and whence, Come from what country ?" Then Orestes said,

"Thessalians ; victims to Olympian Jove

We, at the stream of Alpheus, go to slay." 855

The king replied, " Be now my guests, and share

The feast with me ; a bullock to the Nymphs

I sacrifice ; at morn's first dawn arise,

Then you shall go : but enter now my house."

Thus as he spoke, he took us by the hand, 860

And led us nothing loath : beneath his roof

Soon as we came, he bade his slaves prepare

Baths for the strangers, that the altars nigh,

Beside the lustral ewers, they might stand :

Orestes then,—" With lavers from the pure 865

And living stream we lately have been cleansed :

But with thy citizens these rites to share

If strangers are permitted, we, O king,
 Are ready to thy hospitable feast
 Nothing averse." The converse here had end: 870
 Their spears, with which they guard the king, aside
 The attendants laid; and to their office all
 Applied their hands: some led the victim, some
 The basket bore, some raised the flames, and placed
 The caldrons on the hearth: the house resounds.
 Thy mother's husband on the altars cast 876
 The salted cakes, and thus address'd his vows:
 "Ye Nymphs, that haunt the rocks, these hallow'd
 rites

Oft let me pay, and of my royal spouse,
 Now absent, both by fortune bless'd as now; 880
 And let our foes, as now, in ruin lie:"
 Thee and Orestes naming. But my lord
 Far other vows address'd, but gave his words
 No utterance, to regain his father's house.
 Ægisthus then the sacrificing sword 885
 Took from the basket, from the bullock's front
 To cut the hair, which on the hallow'd fire
 With his right hand he threw; and as his slaves
 The victim held, beneath its shoulder plunged
 The blade; then turning, to thy brother spoke:—
 "Among her noble arts Thessalia boasts 891
 To rein the fiery courser, and with skill
 The victim's limbs to sever: stranger, take
 The sharp-edged steel, and show that Fame reports
 Of the Thessalians truth." The Doric blade 895
 Of temper'd metal in his hand he grasp'd,
 And from his shoulders threw his graceful robe;
 Then to assist him in the toilsome task
 Chose Pylades, and bade the slaves retire:
 The victim's foot he held, and its white flesh, 900
 His hand extending, bared, and stripp'd the hide
 Ere round the course the chariot twice could roll,
 And laid the entrails open: in his hands
 The fate-presaging parts Ægisthus took
 Inspecting: in the entrails was no lobe; 905

The valves and cells the gall containing show
 Dreadful events to him, that view'd them, near.
 Gloomy his visage darken'd: but my lord
 Ask'd whence his sadden'd aspect: he replied;—
 “Stranger, some treachery from abroad I fear: 910
 Of mortal men Orestes most I hate,
 The son of Agamemnon: to my house
 He is a foe.”—“Wilt thou,” replied my lord,
 “King of this state, an exile's treachery dread?
 But that, these omens leaving, we may feast, 915
 Give me a Phthian for this Doric blade;
 The breast asunder I will cleave.” He took
 The steel, and cut. Ægisthus, yet intent,
 Parted the entrails; and as low he bow'd
 His head, thy brother, rising to the stroke, 920
 Drove through his back the ponderous axe, and rived
 The spinal joints: his heaving body writhed
 And quiver'd, struggling in the pangs of death.
 The slaves beheld, and instant snatch'd their spears,
 Many 'gainst two contesting; but my lord 925
 And Pylades with dauntless courage stood
 Opposed, and shook their spears: Orestes then
 Thus spoke:—“I come not to this state a foe,
 Nor to my servants; but my father's death
 I on his murderer have avenged: you see 930
 The unfortunate Orestes: kill me not,
 My father's old attendants.” At those words
 They all restrain'd their spears; and he was known
 By one grown hoary in the royal house.
 Crowns on thy brother's head they instant placed,
 With shouts of joy. He comes, and with him brings
 Proof of his daring, not a Gorgon's head, 937
 But, whom thou hatest, Ægisthus: blood for blood,
 Bitter requital, on the dead is fallen.

CHORUS.

Now for the dance, my friend, thy foot prepare; 940
 Now with joy enraptured tread,
 Light as the hind that seems to bound in air,
 The sprightly measures lead.

Thy brother comes, and on his brows
 A crown hath Conquest placed ; 945
 A wreath so glorious ne'er the victor graced
 Where famed Alpheus flows.
 Come then, and with my choral train
 To Conquest raise the joyful strain.

ELEC. O Light, and thou resplendent orb of day
 O Earth, and Night, which I beheld before, 951
 Now I view freely, freely now I breathe,
 Now that Ægisthus, by whose murdering hand
 My father fell, is dead. Whate'er my house
 To grace the head contains, I will bring forth, 955
 My friends, and crown my brother's conquering
 brows.

CHORUS.

Whate'er of ornament thy house contains
 Bring, to grace thy brother's head :
 My choir the dance, accorded to sweet strains
 Dear to the Muse, shall lead ; 960
 For now our kings, whose honour'd hand
 The sceptre justly sway'd,
 Low in the dust the oppressive tyrant laid,
 Again shall rule the land.
 Rise then, my voice, with cheerful cries, 965
 Attemper'd to thy triumph, rise.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

ELEC. O glorious victor, from a father sprung
 Victorious in the embattled fields of Troy,
 Orestes, for thy brows receive this crown.
 From the vain contest of the lengthen'd course 970
 Thou comest not, but victorious o'er thy foe,
 Ægisthus slain, by whom thy father bled,
 And I have been undone. Thou, too, brave youth,
 Train'd by a man most pious, in his toils
 Faithful associate, Pylades, receive 975

From me this wreath ; for thine an equal share
Of danger : ever let me hold you bless'd.

ORES. First, of this glorious fortune deem the gods,
Electra, sovereign rulers ; then to me,
The minister of fortune and the gods, 980
Give the due praise. I come not to relate
That I have slain Ægisthus : deeds shall speak
For me ; a proof to all, his lifeless corse
I bring thee : treat it as thy soul inclines :
Cast it by ravenous beasts to be devour'd, 985
Or to the birds, the children of the air,
Fix it, impaled, a prey : the tyrant now,
Ægisthus, is thy slave, once call'd thy lord

ELEC. Shame checks my tongue : yet something
would I speak.

ORES. What wouldst thou ? Speak : thy fears are
vanish'd now. 990

ELEC. I fear to insult the dead, lest censures rise.

ORES. Not one of all mankind would censure thee.

ELEC. Hard to be pleased our city, prompt to
blame.

ORES. Speak what thou wouldst, my sister ; for to
him

Inexpiable enmity we bear. 995

ELEC. Let me then speak : but where shall I begin
Thy insults to recount ? with what conclude ?

Or how pursue the train of my discourse ?

I never with the opening morn forbore

To breath my silent plaints, which to thy face 1000

I wish'd to utter, from my former fears

If e'er I should be free : I now am free.

Now, to thee living what I wish'd to speak,

I will recount. Thou hast destroy'd my hopes,
Made me an orphan, him and me bereft 1005

Of a dear father, by no wrongs enforced.

My mother basely wedding, thou hast slain

The glorious leader of the Grecian arms,

Yet never didst thou tread the fields of Troy.

Nay, such thy folly, thou couldst hope to find 1010

My mother, shouldst thou wed her, naught of ill
 To thee intending : hence my father's bed
 By thee was foully wrong'd. But let him know,
 Who with forbidden love another's wife
 Corrupts, then, by necessity constrain'd, 1015
 Receives her as his own,—should he expect
 To find that chastity preserved to him,
 Which to her former bed was not preserved,
 He must be wretched from his frustrate hope.
 And what a life of misery didst thou lead, 1020
 Though not by thee deem'd ill ! Thy conscious mind
 Of thy unholy nuptials felt the guilt ;
 My mother knew that she an impious man
 In thee had wedded ; and, polluted both,
 Thou hadst her fortune, she thy wickedness. 1025
 'Mong all the Argives this had Fame divulged ;—
 The man obeys the wife, and not the wife
 Her husband : shameful this, when in the house
 The woman sovereign rules, and not the man ;
 And when of children speaks the public voice, 1030
 As from the mother, not the father sprung,
 To me it is displeasing. He who weds
 A wife of higher rank and nobler blood,
 Sinks into nothing, in her splendour lost.
 This truth unknown, thy pride was most deceived,
 Thyself as great thou vauntedst, in the power 1036
 Of riches vainly elevate : but these
 Are nothing, their enjoyment frail and brief :
 Nature is firm, not riches ; she remains
 For ever, and triumphant lifts her head ; 1040
 But unjust wealth, which sojourns with the base,
 Glitters for some short space, then flies away.
 To women thy demeanour I shall pass
 Unmention'd, for to speak it ill beseems
 A virgin's tongue ; yet I shall make it known 1045
 By indistinct suggestion : arrogance
 Swell'd thy vain mind, for that the royal house
 Was thine, and beauty graced thy perfect form.
 But be not mine a husband, whose fair face

In softness with a virgin's vies, but one 1050
 Of manly manners; for the sons of such
 By martial toils are train'd to glorious deeds;
 The beauteous only to the dance give grace.

Perish, thou wretch, to nothing noble form'd:
 Such wast thou found, and vengeance on thy head
 At length hath burst: so perish all, that dare 1056
 Atrocious deeds! Nor deem, though fair his course
 At first, that he hath vanquish'd Justice, ere
 He shall have reach'd the goal, the end of life.

CHO. His deeds were dreadful: dreadful hath he
 felt 1060

Your vengeance. With great power is Justice arm'd.

ORES. So let it be. But bear this body hence,
 My slaves; to darkness let it be consign'd;
 That when my mother comes, before she feels
 The deadly stroke, she may not see the corse. 1065

ELEC. Forbear: to other subjects turn we now.

ORES. What, from Mycenæ see I aid advance?

ELEC. This is no friendly aid; my mother comes.

ORES. As we could wish, amid the toils she runs.

ELEC. High on her car in splendid state she comes.

ORES. What shall we do? Our mother shall we
 kill? 1071

ELEC. On seeing her hath pity seized thy heart?

ORES. She bore me, bred me: her how shall I
 slay?

ELEC. As she thy noble father slew and mine.

ORES. O Phœbus, wild and rash the charge thou
 gavest. 1075

ELEC. Who then are sage, if Phœbus be unwise?

ORES. The charge to kill my mother: impious
 deed!

ELEC. What guilt were thine to avenge thy father's
 death?

ORES. Now pure, my mother's murderer I should
 fly. 1079

ELEC. Will vengeance for thy father be a crime?

ORES. But I shall suffer for my mother's blood.

ELEC. To whom thy father's vengeance then
assign?

ORES. Like to the god perchance some demon
spoke.

ELEC. What, from the sacred tripod? Vain sur-
mise.

ORES. Ne'er can my reason deem this answer just.

ELEC. Sink not, unmann'd, to weak and timorous
thoughts. 1086

ORES. For her then shall I spread the fatal net?

ELEC. In which her husband, caught by thee, was
slain.

ORES. The house I enter. Dreadful the intent;
Dreadful shall be my deeds. If such your will. 1090
Ye heavenly powers, so let it be; to me
A bitter, yet a pleasing task assign'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHO. Imperial mistress of the Argive realms,
Drawing from Tyndarus thy noble birth,
And sister to the illustrious sons of Jove, 1095
Who mid the flaming ether dwell in stars,
By mortals labouring in the ocean waves
In honour as their great preservers held,
Hail! equal with the gods I thee revere,
Thy riches such, and such thy happy state; 1100
Thy fortune, queen, our veneration claims.

CLY. First from the car, ye Trojan dames, alight,
Then take my hand, that I too may descend.
The temple of the gods with Phrygian spoils
Are richly graced: these, from the land of Troy 1105
Selected, for the daughter which I lost,
A small but honourable prize are mine.

ELEC. And may not I (for from my father's house
I am an outcast slave, this wretched hut 1109
My mean abode) thy bless'd hand, mother, hold?

CLY. My slaves are here: labour not thou for me.

ELEC. Why hast thou driven me from the house a
slave?

For when the house was taken, I was seized,
As these, an orphan of my father reft.

CLY. Such were the measures which thy father
plann'd, 1115

Where it beseem'd him least against his friends :
For I will speak (though when a woman forms
An ill opinion, from her tongue will flow
Much bitterness) my wrongs from him received :
These known, if for thy hatred thou hast cause, 1120

'Tis just that thou abhor me ; but if not,
Why this abhorrence ? Me did Tyndarus
Give to thy father, not that I should die,
Nor my poor children : yet he led away
(Her nuptials with Achilles the pretence), 1125

To Aulis led my daughter, in whose bay
His fleet was station'd ; on the altar there
My Iphigenia, like a blooming flower,
Did he mow down : averting hostile arms,
That threaten'd desolation to the state, 1130

Or for the welfare of his house, to save
His other children, if for many one
A victim he had slain, the deed had found
Forgiveness ; but for Helena, because
She was a wanton, and his faithless wife 1135

Her husband could not punish, for this cause
My daughter he destroy'd : yet for these wrongs,
Great as they were, I had not been enraged,
Nor had I slain my husband ; but he came,
And with him brought the raving prophetess 1140

Admitted to his bed ; and thus one house
Contain'd two wives. Women indeed are frail,
Nor other shall I speak ; but this inferr'd,
Whene'er the husband from his honour swerves,
From his connubial bed estranged, the wife 1145

Will imitate his manners, and obtain
Some other friend : yet Slander 'gainst our sex
Raises her voice aloud ; while those who cause
These trespasses, the men, no blame shall reach.
Had Menelaus in secret from his house 1150

Been borne, ought I Orestes to have slain,
 To save my sister's husband? His son's death
 How had thy father brook'd? And should not he,
 Who slew my daughter, die? Was I to bear
 Patient his wrongs? I slew him; to that path, 1155
 Which only I could tread, I turn'd my foot,
 Uniting with his foes; for of his friends
 Against him who with me would lift the sword?
 If, that thy father not with justice died,
 Aught thou wouldst urge against me, freely speak.

ELEC. What thou hast said is just; yet shame
 attends 1161

That justice: for the wife, if aught she know
 Of sober sense, should to her husband yield
 In all things unreluctant. If thy mind
 Dissents, nor to the measure of my speech 1165
 Accedes, yet let my mother her last words
 Call to her memory: let me freely speak.

CLY. I now repeat them, nor retract, my child.

ELEC. But, hearing, wilt thou not inflict some ill?

CLY. I will not, but with kindness will requite.

ELEC. Then I will speak, and preface thus my
 speech. 1171

I wish, my mother, that a better mind
 Were thine; for excellence of form hath brought
 To thee and Helena deserved praise.
 Nature hath form'd you sisters, light and vain, 1175
 Of Castor much unworthy. She was borne
 Away, and by her own consent undone:
 Thou hast destroy'd the noblest man of Greece:
 Thy daughter's death thy pretext, thou hast slain
 Thy husband: but so well as I none knows, 1180
 Before it was decreed that she should die,
 While from Mycenæ his departure yet
 Was recent, at the mirror didst thou form
 The graceful ringlets of thy golden hair.
 The wife, that in her husband's absence seeks 1185
 With curious care to set her beauty forth,
 Mark as a wanton: she with nicest skill

Would not adorn her person to appear
 Abroad, but that she is inclined to ill.
 Of all the Grecian dames, didst thou alone, 1190
 I know, rejoice, when prosperous were the arms
 Of Troy ; but when defeated, on thine eyes
 A cloud hung dark : for never didst thou wish
 That Agamemnon should from Troy return.
 Yet glorious was the occasion offer'd thee 1195
 The strength of female virtue to display :
 Thou hadst a husband in no excellence
 Inferior to Ægisthus ; and so vile
 Thy sister's conduct, thou hadst power from thence
 The highest honour to thyself to draw ; 1200
 For in the foulness of the example, Vice
 Instructive holds a mirror to the good.
 But if my father, as thou urgest, kill'd
 Thy daughter, how have I to thee done wrong ?
 My brother how ? Or why, when thou hadst slain
 Thy husband, didst thou not to us consign 1206
 Our father's house, but make it the lewd scene
 Of other nuptials purchased by that prize ?
 Nor is thy husband exiled for thy son ;
 Nor hath he died for me, though, far beyond 1210
 My sister's death, me living hath he slain.
 If blood, in righteous retribution, calls
 For blood, by me behooves it thou shouldst bleed,
 And by thy son Orestes, to avenge
 My father : there if this was just, alike 1215
 Is it just here. Unwise is he who weds,
 Allured by riches or nobility,
 A vicious woman : all that greatness brings
 Must yield to that endear'd, domestic bliss,
 Which on the chaste though humble bed attends.
 CHO. Respecting women Fortune ever rules 1221
 In nuptials : some a source of joy I see
 To mortals ; some nor joy nor honour know.
 CLY. Always, my daughter, was thy nature form'd
 Fond of thy father : not unusual this : 1225
 Some love the men, and on their mother's some

With greater warmth their sweet affections place.
I will forgive thee: nor indeed, my child,
In deeds done by me do I so rejoice.

But do I see thee, fresh from child-birth, thus 1230
Unbathed, and in these wretched vestments clad?

Ah, my unhappy counsels, that I urged
My husband 'gainst thee to a rage too harsh!

ELEC. Too late to breathe the sigh, when thou
canst give

No healing medicine. My father dead, 1235
Why not recall thy outcast, wandering son?

CLY. I fear: my welfare I regard, not his,
Said to breathe vengeance for his father's death.

ELEC. Against us why thy husband so enrage?

CLY. Such is his nature; and impetuous thine.

ELEC. My grief is great: but I will check my
rage. 1241

CLY. And he no longer will be harsh to thee.

ELEC. High his aspiring; in my house he dwells.

CLY. Seest thou what contests thou wouldst raise
anew?

ELEC. I say no more: I fear him, as I fear—

CLY. Cease this discourse. My presence why
required? 1246

ELEC. That I am late a mother, thou, I ween,
Hast heard: make thou the sacrifice for me.

I have no skill, on the tenth rising morn

What for my son the rites require; for me 1250

(This my first child) experience hath not taught.

CLY. This is her task, who aided at the birth.

ELEC. Unaided and alone I bore the child.

CLY. So neighbourless, so friendless stands thy
house?

ELEC. None with the poor a friendship wish to
form. 1255

CLY. Then I will go, and offer to the gods,

The days accomplish'd, for thy son. This grace

For thee perform'd, I hasten to the fields,

Where to the nymphs my husband now presents

The hallow'd victim. My attendants, drive 1260

These chariots hence, and lead the steeds to stalls ;
 When you imagine to the gods these rites
 I shall have paid, again be present here :
 My husband too behooves it me to grace.

ELEC. Let my poor house receive thee ; but take
 heed 1265

Lest thy rich vests the blackening smoke defiles.
 There shalt thou sacrifice, as to the gods
 Behooves thee sacrifice : the basket there
 Is for the rites prepared, and the keen blade
 Which struck the bull : beside him shalt thou fall
 By a like blow. In Pluto's courts his bride 1271
 He shall receive, with whom in heaven's fair light
 Thy couch was shared : to thee this grace I give :
 Thou vengeance for my father shalt give me.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Refluent the waves of mischief swell ; 1275
 The forceful whirlwind veers around.
 Then in the bath my monarch fell :
 The roofs, the battlements resound ;
 The polish'd stones, that form the walls,
 His voice re-echo as the hero falls :— 1280
 “ Why, barbarous woman, by thy hand,
 After ten years of war on Phrygia's plain
 Return'd victorious to my native land,
 Why, barbarous woman, am I slain ?”

ANTISTROPHE.

Now, Justice, for the injured bed 1285
 Which light Love gloried to betray,
 Turns back with vengeance on her head,
 Who dared her lord to slay.
 Long absent in the fields of fame
 Scarce to the high Cyclopean towers he came, 1290
 Eager to shed his blood she strove ;
 With her own hand the keen-edged axe she
 sway'd,
 With her own hand the murderous weapon drove,
 And low her hapless husband laid,—

EPODE.

Hapless, to such a pest allied, 1295
 She, like a lioness, in savage pride
 Mid shaggy forests wild that feeds,
 Dared such atrocious deeds.

CLY. O, by the gods, my children, do not kill
 Your mother! [within.]

CHO. Heard you in the house her cry.

CLY. Ah me, ah me! 1301

CHO. I too lament thy fate,
 Fallen by thy children's hands. The avenging god
 Dispenses justice when occasion calls.
 Dreadful thy punishment; but dreadful deeds,
 Unhappy, 'gainst thy husband didst thou dare. 1305
 Stain'd with their mother's recent-streaming blood,
 See, from the house they come, terrible proof
 Of ruthless slaughter. Ah! there is no house,
 Nor hath been, with calamities oppress'd,
 More than the wretched race of Tantalus. 1310

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. O Earth, and thou all-seeing Jove, behold
 These bloody, these detested deeds! In death,
 Stretch'd on the ground, beneath my hand they lie,
 Both lie, a sad atonement for my wrongs.

ELEC. Much to be mourn'd, my brother, to be
 mourn'd 1315.
 With tears, and I the cause. Uncheck'd, unaw'd
 I to my mother came; I boldly came
 To her that gave me birth. Alas thy fate,
 Thy fate, my mother! Thou hast suffer'd ills,
 And from thy children, whose remembrance time
 Can ne'er efface, deeds ruthless, and far worse 1321
 Than ruthless: yet with justice hast thou paid
 This debt to vengeance for my father's blood.

ORES. O Phœbus, vengeance from thy hallow'd
 shrine
 Didst thou command; unutterable deeds, 1325

But not obscure, through thee are done, from Greece
The bloody bed removed. But to what state
Shall I now go, what hospitable house?

Who will receive me? Who, that fears the gods, 1329
Will look on me, stain'd with my mother's blood?

ELEC. And whither, to what country shall I fly,
Wretch that I am? What nuptials shall be mine?
What husband lead me to the bridal bed?

ORES. Again, again thy sober sense returns,
Changed with the gale: thy thoughts are holy now,
Then ruled by phrensy. To what dreadful deeds,
O thou most dear, hast thou thy brother urged 1337
Reluctant? Didst thou see her, when she drew
Her vests aside, and bared her breasts, and bow'd
To earth her body whence I drew my birth, 1340
While in her locks my furious hand I wreathed?

ELEC. With anguish'd mind, I know, thou didst
proceed,
When heard thy wailing mother's piteous cries.

ORES. These words, while with her hands she
stroked my cheeks,
Burst forth:—"Thy pity I implore, my son." 1345
Soothing she spoke, as on my cheeks she hung,
That bloodless from my hand the sword might fall.

CHO. Wretched Electra, how couldst thou sustain
A sight like this? How bear thy mother's death,
Seeing her thus before thine eyes expire? 1350

ORES. Holding my robe before mine eyes, I raised
The sword, and plunged it in my mother's breast.

ELEC. I urged thee to it: I too touch'd the sword.

CHO. Of deeds most dreadful this, which thou hast
done.

Cover thy mother's body; in her robes 1355
Decent compose her wounded limbs. Thou gavest
Being to those who were to murder thee.

ELEC. Behold, my friends, and not my friends, we
wrap

1358 Electra here addresses herself to the Chorus and the
Trojan dames who had attended Clytemnestra.

Her robes around her, to our house the end
Of mighty ills.

CHO. But see, above the house 1360
What radiant forms appear! Or are they gods
Celestial? Mortals through the ethereal way
Walk not: but why to human sight disclosed?

CASTOR AND POLLUX.

CAS. Hear, son of Agamemnon; for to thee
Thy mother's brothers, twin-born sons of Jove, 1365
Castor, and this my brother Pollux, speak.
Late having calm'd the ocean waves, that swell'd,
The labouring vessel menacing, we came
To Argos, where our sister we beheld,
Thy mother slain: with justice vengeance falls 1370
On her: in thee unholy is the deed.

Yet Phœbus, Phœbus—but, my king is he;—
I will be silent: yet, though wise, he gave
To thee response not wise: but I must praise
Perforce these things. Thou now must do what
Fate 1375

And Jove decree. To Pylades affy
Electra; let him lead her to his house
His bride: but leave thou Argos; for its gates,
Thy mother slain, to thee is not allow'd
To enter; for the Furies, hounds of hell, 1380
Will chase thee, wandering, and to madness whirl'd.
Go then to Athens, seat of Pallas; clasp
Her hallow'd image: that they touch thee not,
She o'er thy head her Gorgon shield will hold:
They from her dreadful dragons will start back 1385
Appall'd. The mount of Mars is there, where first
On blood the gods sat judges, when, enraged
That by unhallow'd nuptials wrong had stain'd
His daughter, Mars, to ruthless vengeance fired,
Slew Halirrhottus, of ocean's lord 1390

1372 Peculiarly his king, as the god of light; though this is
a general title frequently given to Apollo.

The son. Most righteous from that time is held
 The judgment there, and by the gods confirm'd;
 There thou must make appeal; this bloody deed
 Be there decided: from the doom of blood
 Absolved, the equal numbers of the shells 1395
 Shall save thee, that thou die not; for the blame
 Apollo on himself will charge, whose voice
 Ordain'd thy mother's death: in future times
 'This law for ever shall be ratified,
 The votes in equal number shall absolve. 1400
 At this the dreadful goddesses, with grief
 Deep wounded, through the yawning earth shall
 sink
 Ev'n at the mount; thence an oracular gulf
 Hallow'd, revered by mortals. On the banks
 Of Alpheus, the Lycæan temple near, 1405
 Thou must inhabit an Arcadian state;
 And from thy name the city shall be call'd.
 This I have said to thee; but in the earth
 The citizens of Athens shall entomb
 The body of Ægisthus: the last rites, 1410
 Due to thy mother, Menelaus shall pay
 (At Nauplia late from vanquish'd Troy arrived),
 And Helena: from Egypt, from the house
 Of Proteus she returns: to Ilion's towers
 She went not; but that strife and bloody war 1415
 'Mong mortal men might rise, an imaged form
 Resembling Helena Jove sent to Troy.
 'This virgin now let Pylades receive
 His bride, and home to the Achaian land
 Conduct her: him, to thee in words allied, 1420
 To Phocis let him lead, and give him there,
 Just to his modest virtue, ample wealth.
 Thou to the narrow Isthmus bend thy steps,
 Thence speed thee to the bless'd Cecropian state.
 The fated doom, assign'd for blood, fulfill'd, 1425
 Thou shalt be happy, from thy toils released.

CHO. O sons of Jove, may we presume to approach,

And converse with you be allow'd to hold ?

CAS. You may : no curse this blood derives on
you.

ORES. May I address you, sons of Tyndarus ? 1430

CAS. Thou mayst : to Phœbus this dire deed I
charge.

CHO. Gods as you are, and brothers to the slain,
Why from the house did not your power avert
This deadly ill ?

CAS. The dire necessity
Of fate impell'd it, and the voice unwise 1435
Of Phœbus from his shrine.

ELEC. But me what voice
Of Phœbus urged, what oracle, that I
The murderer of my mother should become ?

CAS. Common the actions, common too the fates.
One demon, hostile to your parents, rent 1440
The hearts of both.

ORES. For such a length of time
Not seen, loved sister, am I torn so soon
From thy dear converse, leaving thee so soon,
And left ?

CAS. She hath a husband, and a house ;
Nor suffers aught severe, save that she leaves 1445
The Argive state.

ORES. And what severer wo
Can rend the anguish'd heart, than to be driven
An outcast from our country ? I must leave
My father's house, and for my mother's blood
The sentence pass'd by foreign laws abide. 1450

CAS. Resume thy courage : to the sacred seat
Of Pallas shalt thou come : be firm ; endure.

ELEC. O my loved brother, clasp, O clasp my
breast
Close to thy breast ; for from our father's house
A mother's curse hath torn us, dreadful curse ! 1455

ORES. Thus let me clasp thee : o'er me, as now
dead,
As o'er my tomb thy lamentations pour.

CAS. Ah, thou hast utter'd sorrow ev'n to gods
Mournful to hear. In me, in heaven's high powers,
Is pity for the woes of mortal men. 1460

ORES. I shall no more behold thee.

ELEC. And no more
Shall I come near thy sight.

ORES. No more with thee
Shall I hold converse: this my last address.

ELEC. Farewell, Mycenæ! and you, virgins, born
In the same state with me, farewell, farewell! 1465

ORES. O thou most faithful, dost thou go ev'n now?

ELEC. I go; but dew my soften'd eyes with tears.

ORES. Go, Pylades; go thou with joy, and wed
Electra.

CAS. Them the nuptial rites await.
Haste thou to Athens; fly these hounds of hell; 1470
For 'gainst thee they their hideous steps advance,
Gloomy and dark, their hands with serpents arm'd,
Rejoicing in the dreadful pains they give.

To the Sicilian sea with speed we go,
To save the vessels labouring in the waves; 1475

But to the impious through the ethereal tract

We no assistance bring: but those, to whom

Justice and sanctity of life is dear,

We from their dangerous toils relieve, and save.

Let no one then unjustly will to act, 1480

Nor in one vessel with the perjured sail:

A god to mortals this monition gives.

CHO. O be you bless'd! and those to whom is given
Calmly the course of mortal life to pass,

By no affliction sunk, pronounce we bless'd. 1485

O R E S T E S.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ELECTRA.
HELENA.
ORESTES.
MENE LAUS
TYNDARUS.
PYLADES.
APOLLO.
MESSENGER.
PHRYGIAN SLAVE.
CHORUS of Argive virgins.

ORSTES.

ARGUMENT.

THIS play represents Orestes pursued by the enmity of the Furies, as a punishment for the murder of his mother; while the Argives, by the instigations of Tyndarus, the father of Clytemnestra, prefer a charge of parricide against the young prince and his sister. At this critical juncture Menelaus arrives at Argos with Helen, and is solicited by his unhappy nephew to support the cause of his relatives before the assembled judges: apprehensions of danger, however, prevent him from interfering in their behalf, and Orestes, with Electra, are condemned to death. In order to punish the apathy of Menelaus, Pylades proposes to his friend to seize Helen by stratagem, who is about to fall a sacrifice to their resentment, when she suddenly and miraculously disappears, and is enrolled in the number of the gods. The two friends next, by the artifices of Electra, gain possession of Hermione, the daughter of Menelaus, whom they threaten with immediate destruction, when Apollo interferes, and rescues the maiden from impending danger; directing Menelaus to bestow his daughter on Orestes, to whom he prescribes the means necessary for expiating his parricidal guilt.—[The scene is in the royal palace at Argos.]

ELECTRA.

THERE is not in the stores of angry Heaven
Aught terrible, affliction or distress,
But miserable man bears its full weight.
Ev'n Tantalus, the son of Jove, the bless'd,
(Not to malign his fate) hangs in the air,
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And trembles at the rock, which o'er his head
 Projects its threatening mass ; a punishment,
 They say, for that to heaven's high feast admitted,
 A mortal equal with the immortals graced,
 He curb'd not the intemperance of his tongue : 10
 The sire of Pelops he, of Atreus this,
 For whom the Fates weaving a diadem,
 Wove discord with the thread, to kindle war
 Betwixt the brothers, Atreus and Thyestes.
 But why recite things horrible to tell ? 15
 Him Atreus feasted, having slain his sons.
 From Atreus (may oblivion hide the rest !)
 The illustrious Agamemnon (if illustrious)
 And Menelaus had birth ; Aerope
 Of Crete their mother. Menelaus espoused 20
 The fatal Helen, by the gods abhorr'd :
 The imperial Agamemnon woo'd the bed
 Of Clytemnestra, memorable to Greece :
 From her three daughters sprung, Chrysothemis,
 And Iphigenia, and myself Electra, 25
 One son, Orestes, from this wicked mother,
 Who in the inextricable robe entangled
 Her husband murder'd, for a cause which ill
 Becomes a virgin's modest lips to unfold.
 The injustice of Apollo must I blame ? 30
 Orestes he commands to slay his mother,
 Nor bears to all the glory of the deed.
 Not disobedient to the god, he slew her.
 I had my share, such as a woman might,
 And Pylades assisted in the act. 35
 Since then the poor Orestes pines away,
 Impair'd with cruel sickness : on his bed
 He lies ; his mother's blood to phrensy whirls
 His tortured sense : the avenging powers, that haunt
 His soul with terrors thus, I dare not name. 40
 The sixth day this, since on the hallow'd pile
 My slaughter'd mother purged her stains away,
 No food hath pass'd his lips, no bath refresh'd
 His limbs ; but in his garments cover'd close,

When his severe disease abates a little, 45
 He melts in tears ; and sometimes from his couch
 Starts furious, like a colt burst from his yoke.
 Meantime the state of Argos hath decreed
 That sheltering roof, and fire, and conference
 Be interdicted to us matricides ; 50
 And this decisive day the states pronounce
 Our doom, to die crush'd with o'erwhelming stones,
 Or by the avenging sword plunged in our breasts.
 Yet have we one small ray of brightening hope,
 Hope that we die not : for from Troy return'd, 55
 After long wanderings Menelaus arrives,
 His vessels in the Nauplian harbour moor'd,
 And to this strand impels his eager oar :
 But the wo-working Helen in the shades
 Of sheltering night, lest some, whose sons were slain
 Beneath the walls of Troy, seeing her walk 61
 In day's fair light, with vengeful rage might rise,
 And crush the shining mischief, first he lands,
 And sends her to our house : there now she is,
 Weeping her sister's fate and our afflictions. 65
 Yet mid her grief, this comfort she enjoys,
 Hermione, her virgin daughter, whom
 At Sparta, when she sail'd for Troy, she left,
 The father to my mother's care consign'd.
 In her delighted, she forgets her woes. 70
 But my quick eye glances to each access,
 If Menelaus advancing I might see.
 Weak help from others, if not saved by him :
 The house of the unhappy hath no friend.

ELECTRA, HELENA.

HEL. Daughter of Clytemnestra, and the chief 75
 That drew from Atreus his illustrious birth,
 Virgin of ripest years, how is it, say,
 With thee, unhappy, and the wretch Orestes,
 Who in his mother's blood imbrued his hands ?
 With thee conversing, I am not polluted, 80
 Charging the crime on Phœbus. Yet I mourn

My sister's fate ; for since I sail'd to Troy,
 Urged to that madness by the offended gods,
 These eyes have not beheld her ; yet, her loss
 Deploring, at her fortunes drop the tear. 85

ELEC. Why should I tell thee, what thine eyes
 behold,

The race of Agamemnon in distress ?
 Myself, attendant on the unhappy dead
 (But that he breathes a little, he is dead),
 Sit sleepless : yet reproach I not his ills. 90
 But thou art happy ; happy is thy husband ;
 To us in our calamities ye come.

HEL. How long on this sick bed hath he been laid ?

ELEC. E'er since he shed her blood, who gave him
 breath.

HEL. Ah wretch ! Ah wretched mother, thus to
 perish ! 95

ELEC. Such our lost state, I sink beneath our ills.

HEL. Do me one grace, I beg thee by the gods.

ELEC. As watching at my brother's couch I may.

HEL. Wilt thou go for me to my sister's tomb ?

ELEC. My mother's dost thou mean ? And where-
 fore go ? 100

HEL. These locks and my libations to present.

ELEC. What hinders but thou visit thy friend's
 tomb ?

HEL. And show me to the Grecians ? Shame for-
 bids.

ELEC. Too late discreet ; when shameless from
 thy house— 104

HEL. Just is thy censure, but not friendly to me.

ELEC. And at Mycenæ dost thou feel this shame ?

HEL. I dread the fathers, whose sons died at Troy.

ELEC. Against thee loud the voice of Argos cries.

HEL. Oblige me then, and free me from this fear.

ELEC. I could not look upon my mother's tomb.

HEL. To send these offerings by a slave were
 shame. 111

ELEC. Hermione, thy daughter, why not send ?

HEL. A virgin mid the crowd! Indecent this.

ELEC. The favours of the dead, who train'd her youth

With fond affection, thus she might repay. 115

HEL. 'Tis justly urged: I will obey thee, virgin,
And send my daughter; for thy words are wise.

Hermione, come hither: to the tomb

Of Clytemnestra these libations bear, 119

And these my locks; there pour this honey'd bowl

Foaming with milk and wine; on the high mound,

Addressing thus the dead:—"These hallow'd gifts

Helen, thy sister, offers, who through fear

Approaches not thy tomb, dreading the crowd

Of Argos." Bid her be propitious to us, 125

To me, to thee, my husband, and these two,

These wretched two, whom Phœbus hath undone.

Then promise all, that to a sister's shade

A sister should bestow: go, my child, haste,

Present these gifts; then speed thy quick return. 130

ELEC. O Nature, in the bad how great an ill!

[*alone.*

But in the virtuous strong thy power to save.

See, she hath shorn the extremity of her locks,

Anxious of beauty, the same woman still!

May the gods hate thee, as thou hast ruin'd me, 135

And him, and universal Greece!--Ah me,

My loved companions come, whose friendly grief

Attunes their sad notes to my mournful strains.

He sleeps now; they will wake him, and my eyes

Will melt in tears, when I behold him rave. 140

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. Dearest of women, softly set your feet,
Not to be heard; gently advance; no noise.

Kind is your friendship; but to awake him now

From this sweet rest would be a grief to me.

CHORUS.

Silence, silence: softly tread:

145

Nor foot be heard, nor sound, nor noise.

ELECTRA.

This way far, far from the bed.

CHORUS.

I obey.

ELECTRA.

Hush, let thy voice
Steal on my ear

Soft as the whispers of the breathing reed. 150

CHORUS.

Soft as the whispers of the breathing reed
My voice shall steel upon thy ear.

ELECTRA.

Ay, thus, low, low ; softly come near ;
Come softly, friends, and tell me why
This visit. A long sleep hath closed his eye. 155

CHORUS.

Doth hope then brighten on his ill ?

ELECTRA.

Alas, what hope ? Behold him lie ;
He breathes, a little breathes, and still
Heaves at short intervals a sigh.

CHORUS.

Unhappy state ! 160

ELECTRA.

Death were it, should you, as thus loud you weep,
Fright from his eyelids the sweet joys of sleep.

CHORUS.

Yet wail I his unhappy state,
Abhorred deeds of deadly hate,
Rage of vindictive, torturing woes, 165
Which the relentless powers of heaven impose

ELECTRA.

Unjust, unjust the stern command,
The stern command Apollo gave
From Themis' seat, his ruthless hand
In blood, in mother's blood to lave. 170

CHORUS.

Ah, turn thine eye ;
He stirs, he moves, roll'd in the covering vest.

ELECTRA.

Wretch, thy rude clamours have disturb'd his rest.

CHORUS.

And yet I think sleep locks his eye.

ELECTRA.

Wilt thou be gone? hence wilt thou fly, 175
That Quiet here again may dwell?

CHORUS.

Again composed, he sleeps again.

ELECTRA.

'Tis well.

CHORUS.

Awful queen, whose gentle power
Brings sweet oblivion of our woes,
And in the calm and silent hour 180
Distils the blessings of repose;—
Come, awful Night;

Come from the gloom of Erebus profound,
And spread thy sable-tinctured wings around;
Speed to this royal house thy flight: 185
For pale-eyed Grief, and wild Affright,
And all the horrors of Despair,
Here pour their rage, and threaten ruin here.

ELECTRA.

Softly let your warblings flow;
Farther, a farther distance keep: 190
The far-off cadence sweet and low
Charms his repose, and aids his sleep.

CHORUS.

Tell us, what end
Awaits his miseries?

ELECTRA.

Death: that end I fear.

He tastes no food.

CHORUS.

Death then indeed, and near. 196

ELECTRA.

When Phœbus gave the dire command
To bathe in mother's blood his hand,

By whom the father sunk in dust,
He doom'd us victims.

CHORUS.

Dire these deeds, but just.

ELECTRA.

She slew, she died. Thy hand abhorr'd 200
In dust my bleeding father laid ;
And for thy blood in vengeance pour'd,
We perish, perish as the dead.

The shadowy train

Thou joinest : but my life shall waste away 205
In tears the night, in sighs and groans the day.

But, ah ! to whom shall I complain ?

Nor child nor husband soothes my pain :

For ever drag I my distress,

Sigh, mourn, and weep in lonely wretchedness. 210

CHO. Go nearer, royal virgin ; nearer view him,
That under this soft sleep the sleep of death
Deceive thee not : I like not this still rest.

ORESTES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. O gentle Sleep, whose lenient power thus
sooths

Disease and pain, how sweet thy visit to me, 215

Who wanted thy soft aid ! Blessing divine,

That to the wretched givest wish'd repose,

Steeping their senses in forgetfulness !—

Where have I been ? Where am I ? How brought
hither ?

My late distraction blots remembrance out. 220

ELEC. My most dear brother, O, what heartfelt
joy,

To see thee lie composed in gentle sleep !

Wilt thou I touch thee ? Shall I raise thee up ?

ORES. Assist me then, assist me ; from my mouth
Wipe off this clotted foam ; wipe my moist eyes.

ELEC. Delightful office, for a sister's hand 225
'To minister relief to a sick brother !

ORES. Lie by my side, and from my face remove

These squalid locks ; they blind my darken'd eyes.

ELEC. How tangled are the ringlets of thy hair,
Wild and disorder'd through this long neglect! 231

ORES. Pray, lay me down again : when this ill
phrensy
Leaves me, I am very feeble, very faint.

ELEC. There, there : the bed is grateful to the
sick,
A mournful, but a necessary tenure. 235

ORES. Raise me again ; more upright ; bend me
forward.

CHO. The sick are wayward through their rest-
lessness.

ELEC. Or wilt thou try with slow steps on the
ground

To fix thy feet ? Variety is sweet. 239

ORES. Most willingly ; it hath the show of health :
The seeming hath some good, though void of truth.

ELEC. Now, my loved brother, hear me, while the
Furies

Permit thy sense thus clear and undisturb'd.

ORES. Hast thou aught new ? If good, I thank
thee for it ;

If ill, I have enough of ill already. 245

ELEC. Thy father's brother, Menelaus, arrives ;
His fleet rides anchor'd in the Nauplian bay.

ORES. Comes he then ? Light on our afflictions
dawns :

Much to my father's kindness doth he owe.

ELEC. He comes ; and, to confirm what now I say,
Brings Helena from Ilium's ruin'd walls. 251

ORES. More to be envied, were he saved alone :
Bringing his wife, he brings a mighty ill.

ELEC. The female line of Tyndarus was born
To deep disgrace, and infamous through Greece. 255

ORES. Be thou unlike them then : 'tis in thy
power ;

And further than in words thy virtue prove.

ELEC. Alas, my brother, wildly rolls thine eye:
So quickly changed! the frantic fit returns.

ORES. Ah mother! Do not set thy Furies on me.
See, how their fiery eyeballs glare in blood, 261
And wreathing snakes hiss in their horrid hair!
There, there they stand, ready to leap upon me!

ELEC. Rest thee, poor brother, rest thee on thy
bed:

Thou seest them not: 'tis fancy's coinage all. 265

ORES. O Phœbus, they will kill me, these dire
forms,

These Gorgon-visaged ministers of hell!

ELEC. Thus will I hold thee, round thee throw
mine arms,

And check the unhappy force of thy wild starts.

ORES. Off, let me go: I know thee, who thou art,
One of the Furies; and thou grapplest with me, 271
To whirl me into Tartarus. Avaunt!

ELEC. What shall I do? Ah me! where shall I
seek

Assistance, since the unfriendly god frowns on us?

ORES. Bring me the bow of horn which Phœbus
gave me, 275

And with it bade me drive these fiends away,
Should they affright me with their maddening ter-
rors.

ELEC. Shall any god by mortal hands be wounded?

ORES. Should she not instant vanish from my
sight. 279

Heard you the clang? Saw you the winged shaft,
Bound from the distant-wounding bow? Ha, ha!
Here yet! On swift wings mount the ethereal air,
And there impeach the oracle of Phœbus.—

Whence this disquiet? Why thus pants my breath?
Ah, whither am I wander'd from my bed? 285

For from the storm the high-swoln waves subside.

Why dost thou weep, my sister? Why decline
Thy drooping head, and hide it in thy vest?

I blush to give thee part in my disease,

And wound with grief thy virgin tenderness. 290
 Let not my ills be thus infectious to thee :
 'Thou barely didst assent ; I did the deed ;
 I shed her blood. But Phœbus I must blame,
 Who urged me to this most unholy act ;
 Then, save with soothing words, assists me not. 295
 Had these eyes seen my father, had I ask'd him
 In duty if I ought to slay my mother,
 I think he would have pray'd me not to plunge
 My murdering sword in her that gave me birth ;
 Since he could not revisit heaven's sweet light, 300
 And I must suffer all these miseries.
 But now unveil thy face and dry thy tears,
 My sister, though afflictions press us sore ;
 And when thou seest me in these fitful moods,
 Sooth my disorder'd sense, and let thy voice 305
 Speak peace to my distraction : when the sigh
 Swells in thy bosom, 'tis a brother's part
 With tender sympathy to calm thy griefs :
 These are the pleasing offices of friends.
 But to thy chamber go, afflicted maid, 310
 There seek repose, close thy long sleepless eyes,
 With food refresh thee and the enlivening bath.
 Shouldst thou forsake me, or with too close tend-
 ance
 Impair thy delicate and tender health,
 Then were I lost indeed ; for thou alone, 315
 Abandon'd as I am, art all my comfort.
 ELEC. Should I forsake thee ! No ; my choice is
 fix'd ;
 And I will die with thee, or with thee live,
 Indifferent for myself ; for shouldst thou die,
 What refuge shall a lonely virgin find, 320
 Her brother lost, her father lost, her friends
 All melted from her ? Yet, if such thy wish,
 I ought to obey : recline thee on thy couch,
 Nor let these visionary terrors fright thee ;
 There rest : though all be fancy's coinage wild, 325
 Yet Nature sinks beneath the violent toil.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Awful powers, whose rapid flight
 Bears you from the realms of night
 To hearts that groan, and eyes that weep,
 Where you joyless orgies keep ; 330
 Ye gloomy powers, that shake the affrighted air ;
 And, arm'd with your tremendous rod,
 Dealing terror, wo, despair,
 Punish murder, punish blood ;—
 For Agamemnon's race this strain, 335
 This supplicating strain, I pour :
 No more afflict his soul with pain,
 Nor torture him with madness more :
 Breathe oblivion o'er his woes,
 Leave him, leave him to repose. 340
 Unhappy youth, what toils are thine,
 Since Phœbus from his central shrine
 Bade thee unsheath the avenging sword,
 And Fate confirm'd the irrevocable word !

ANTISTROPHE.

Hear us, king of gods, O, hear : 345
 Where is soft-eyed Pity, where ?
 Whence, to plunge thee thus in woes,
 Discord stain'd with gore arose ?
 What vengeful demon thus with footstep dread
 Trampling the blood-polluted ground, 350
 Sternly cruel joys to spread
 Horror, rage, and madness round ?
 Wo, wo is me ! in man's frail state
 Nor height nor greatness firm abides :
 On the calm sea, secure of fate, 355
 Her sails all spread, the vessel rides :
 Now the impetuous whirlwinds sweep,
 Roars the storm, and swells the deep,
 Till, with the furious tempest toss'd,
 She sinks in surging billows lost. 360
 Yet firm their fate will I embrace,
 And still revere this heaven-descended race.

CHO. But see, the royal Menelaus advances :
 That awe-commanding and majestic port
 Denotes him of the race of Tantalus.— 365
 Illustrious leader of a thousand ships,
 That bore to Asia's strand thy martial host,
 All hail ! Good Fortune guides thee, and the gods,
 Favouring thy vows, have bless'd thy conquering
 arms.

MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS.

MEN. From Troy return'd, with pleasure I behold
 This royal house, with pleasure mix'd with grief ;
 For never saw I house encompass'd round 372
 With such afflictions. Agamemnon's fate,
 How by his wife he perish'd, I long since
 At Malea learn'd, when, rising from the waves, 375
 Confess'd to open view, the sailors' prophet,
 Unerring Glaucus, the dire bath disclosed,
 The wife, and each sad circumstance of blood ;
 A tale that harrow'd up my soul with grief,
 And wrung the tear from the stern veteran's eye.
 But to the Nauplian coast arrived, my wife 381
 First landed, when I hope with joy to fold
 Orestes and his mother in my arms,
 As happy now, a wave-wash'd fisherman
 Told me that Clytemnestra is no more, 385
 Slain by the unholy sword. But, virgins, say,
 Where is Orestes, who these horrid ills
 Hath dared ? for when the war call'd me to Troy,
 An infant in his mother's arms I left him,
 That now, if seen, his form would be unknown. 390

ORES. He whom thou seek'st am I : I am Orestes.
 To thee, O king, will I unfold my woes,
 And willingly : but first I grasp thy knees,
 And pour my plain, unornamented prayer :
 Save me ; for thou mid my distress art come. 395

MEN. Ye powers of heaven, what do mine eyes
 behold ?
 One from the regions of the dead return'd ?
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ORES. Well hast thou said: I view the light indeed,

But do not live; such are my miseries.

MEN. How wild, how horrid hangs thy matted hair! 400

ORES. The real, not the apparent, racks my soul.

MEN. Thy shrunk and hollow eye glares dreadfully.

ORES. My whole frame wastes; naught, save my name, is left.

MEN. Reason revolts at this thy squalid form.

ORES. Alas, I am the murderer of my mother.

MEN. I have heard it: spare mine ear the tale of wo. 406

ORES. I will: yet Heaven is rich in woes to me.

MEN. What are thy sufferings? What disease consumes thee?

ORES. Conscience; the conscious guilt of horrid deeds.

MEN. How say'st thou? Wisdom suffers when obscure. 410

ORES. A pining melancholy most consumes me.

MEN. Dreadful its power, but not immedicable.

ORES. And phrensy, fierce to avenge my mother's blood.

MEN. When did its rage first seize thee? What the day? 414

ORES. The day I raised my hapless mother's tomb.

MEN. What, in the house, or sitting at the pyre?

ORES. By night, as from rude hands I guard her bones.

MEN. Was any present, to support thy weakness?

ORES. My Pylades, who aided in her death.

MEN. What phantoms frighten thy disordered sense? 420

ORES. Three virgin forms I see gloomy as night.

MEN. Whom thy words mark I know, but will not name.

ORES. Awful they are: forbear irreverent words.

MEN. And do these haunt thee for thy mother's blood?

ORES. Ah wretched me, how dreadful their pursuit! 425

MEN. Thus dreadful sufferings dreadful deeds attend.

ORES. Yet have we where to charge our miseries.

MEN. Name not thy father's death; that were unwise.

ORES. Phœbus, by whose command I slew my mother.

MEN. Of right and justice ignorant, I ween. 430

ORES. We to the gods submit, whate'er they are.

MEN. And doth not Phœbus in thine ills protect thee?

ORES. Not yet: delays attend the powers divine.

MEN. How long then since thy mother breathed her last?

ORES. This the sixth day; the funeral pile yet warm. 435

MEN. How soon thy mother's blood these powers avenge!

ORES. Unwisely said: though true, unkind to friends.

MEN. What then avails to have avenged thy father?

ORES. Naught yet. Delay is as a deed not done.

MEN. In what light doth the city view thy deeds?

ORES. They hate us, so that none hold conference with us. 441

MEN. Hast thou yet purified thy hands from blood?

ORES. Where'er I go, each house is barr'd against me.

MEN. What citizens thus drive thee from the land?

ORES. Cæax, through rancorous malice to my father. 445

MEN. On the avenging Palamedes' death

445 Cæax was the son of Nauplius, and brother of Palamedes.

ORES. I wrought it not. But three pursue my ruin.

MEN. The others who? Some of Ægisthus' friends?

ORES. They hurt me most, whose power now sways the state.

MEN. Commit they not the sceptre to thy hands?

ORES. They, who no longer suffer us to live? 451

MEN. How acting? What thou art assured of, speak.

ORES. Sentence against us will this day be given.

MEN. Of exile? or to die? or not to die?

ORES. To die, with stones crush'd by our citizens.

MEN. Why fliest thou not far from this country's bounds? 456

ORES. On every side we are enclosed with arms.

MEN. By private foes, or by the Argive state?

ORES. By the whole state: in brief, that I may die.

MEN. Wretch, thou hast reach'd misfortune's dire extreme. 460

ORES. In thee is all my hope, in thee my refuge: Happy to us afflicted art thou come.

Share with thy friends that happiness; alone

Enjoy not all the good thou hast received;

In our afflictions bear a friendly part. 465

Think how my father loved thee, and requite

That love to us: it will become thee well.

They have the name of friends, but not the worth,

Who are not friends in our calamities.

CHO. But see, the Spartan Tyndarus this way 470

Directs his aged feet, in sable weeds,

His locks, in grief for his dead daughter, shorn.

ORES. Ah me! He comes indeed, whose presence most

Fills me with shame for what I have misdone.

I was his darling once; my infant age 475

With tenderness he nursed, caress'd me, bore

The child of Agamemnon in his arms,

And loved me like the twin-born sons of Jove ;
 Nor Leda less. And is it thus, my soul,
 Thus, O my bleeding heart, that I requite 480
 Their ill-paid love ? Ah, cover me, ye shades,
 Ye clouds, with friendly darkness wrap me round,
 And hide me from the terrors of his eye !

TYNDARUS, MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS.

TYN. Where shall I see my daughter's husband,
 where
 Find Menelaus ? At Clytemnestra's tomb 485
 Libations as I pour'd, I heard that he,
 With Helen, after all these tedious years,
 Is safely in the Nauplian port arrived.
 O, lead me ; for I long to grasp his hand,
 To feast mine eyes after this length of years, 490
 And welcome to our shores the man I love.

MEN. Hail reverend sharer of the bed with Jove !

TYN. With joy thy greeting I return, my son.
 Ah, not to know the future, what an ill !
 Hateful to me this murderous dragon here 495
 Glares pestilential lightnings from his eyes.
 Wilt thou hold conference with the unhallow'd
 wretch ?

MEN. And wherefore not ? His father was my
 friend.

TYN. From such a father sprung a son so vile ?

MEN. He did ; to be respected, though unhappy.

TYN. Barbarous thy manners, 'mong barbarians
 learn'd. 501

MEN. Nay, Greece enjoins respect to kindred
 blood.

TYN. And not to wish to be above the laws.

MEN. Necessity is to the wise a law.

TYN. Enjoy it thou ; I will have none of it. 505

MEN. Wisdom approves not anger in thy years.

TYN. What ! Is the contest then of wisdom with
 him ?

If virtuous and dishonourable deeds

Are plain to all, who more unwise than he ?
 Deaf to the call of justice, he infringed 510
 The firm authority of the public laws :
 For when beneath my daughter's murdering axe
 The imperial Agamemnon bow'd his head
 (A horrid deed, which never shall I praise),
 He ought to have call'd the laws, the righteous laws,
 To avenge the blood, and by appeal to them 516
 Have driven his mother from this royal house :
 'Thus mid his ill's calm reason had borne rule,
 Justice had held its course, and he been righteous.
 But the same Fury, which had seized his mother, 520
 Had now seized him ; and with ungovern'd rage,
 Justly abhorrent of her impious deed,
 He did a deed more impious, slew his mother.
 For, let me ask thee, should the faithless wife
 Bathe in the husband's blood her murderous hands,
 And should the avenging son the mother slay, 526
 His son again retaliate blood for blood,
 What bound shall the progressive mischief know ?
 The wisdom of our ancestors ordain'd
 That he, who had the guilt of blood upon him, 530
 Be not allow'd the sight, the walks of men,
 By banishment atoning, not by death :
 Else one must always be to death devote,
 Who hath the last pollution on his hands.
 But these vile women doth my soul abhor ; 535
 And her, my daughter, first, who slew her lord :
 Thy Helen too I never will commend,
 Never hold converse with her ; no, nor thee
 Can I approve, who for a worthless woman
 In toilsome march hast trod the fields of Troy. 540
 Yet to my power will I support the laws,
 And check this savage, blood-polluted rage,
 Which spreads wild havoc o'er the unpeopled land.
 Hadst thou the feelings of humanity,
 Wretch, when thy mother cried to thee for mercy,
 And bared her breast to thy relentless view ? 546

I saw it not, that scene of misery,
 Yet the soft tear melts from my aged eye.
 One thing confirms my words; the gods abhor,
 With madness scourge thee, and with terrors haunt,
 Vindictive of thy guilt. What need I hear 551
 From other witness what mine eyes behold?
 Now, Menelaus, I warn thee, mark me well:
 Do not, protecting him, oppose the gods,
 But leave him to the vengeance of the state, 555
 Or never set thy foot on Sparta's shore.
 My daughter by her death hath rightly paid
 The debt to justice; but from him that death
 Was most unjust. O, happy had I been,
 Had I no daughters: there I am a wretch! 560

CHO. Happy his state, who, in his children bless'd,
 Hath not there felt affliction's deepest wound.

ORES. In reverence to thy age I dread to speak
 What I well know must pierce thy heart with grief.
 I am unholy in my mother's death, 565
 But holy, as my father I avenged.

The veneration due to those gray hairs
 Strikes me with awe; else I could urge my plea
 Freely and boldly: but thy years dismay me.
 What could I do? Let fact be weigh'd with fact.
 My father was the author of my being; 571
 Thy daughter brought me forth: he gave me life,
 Which she but foster'd: to the higher cause
 A higher reverence then I deem'd was due.
 Thy daughter (for I dare not call her mother) 575
 Forsook her royal bed for a rank sty
 Of secret and adulterous lust: on me
 The word reflects disgrace, yet I must speak it.
 Ægisthus was this private paramour:
 Him first I slew, then sacrificed my mother; 580
 An impious deed; but I avenged my father.
 Thou threaten'st the just vengeance of the state:
 Hear me: deserve I not the thanks of Greece?
 Should wives with ruffian boldness kill their hus-
 bands,

Then fly for refuge to their sons, and think, 585
 Baring their breast to captivate their pity,
 These deeds would pass for nothing, as the mood,
 For something or for nothing, shall incline them.
 This complot have I broke, by doing what
 Thy pompous language styles atrocious deeds. 590
 My soul abhorr'd my mother, and I slew her,
 Who, when her lord was absent, and in arms
 To glorious conquest led the sons of Greece,
 Betray'd him, with pollution stain'd his bed,
 And, conscious of her guilt, sought not to atone it,
 But, to escape his righteous vengeance, pour'd 596
 Destruction on his head, and kill'd my father.
 Now by the gods, though in a charge of blood
 Ill it becomes me to invoke the gods,
 Had I in silence tamely borne her deeds, 600
 Would not the murder'd, justly hating me,
 Have rous'd the Furies to torment my soul ?
 Or hath she only her assisting fiends,
 And he no favouring power to avenge his wrongs ?
 'Thou, when to that bad daughter thou gavest birth,
 Didst give me ruin ; for through her bold crime 606
 I lost my father, and my mother slew.
 Seest thou Ulysses' wife ? Telemachus
 Shed not her blood ; for she, unstain'd with vice,
 Guards her chaste bed with spotless sanctity. 610
 Seest thou Apollo, who to mortal ears
 Sounds from his central cave the voice of truth ?
 Him we obey in all that he commands :
 Obeying his commands, I slew my mother.
 Drag him then to your bar, put him to death ; 615
 The guilt is his, not mine. What should I do ?
 The guilt on him transferr'd, is not the god
 Sufficient to absolve me ! Where shall man
 Find refuge, if the god, at whose command
 I did it, will not now save me from death ? 620
 Then say not that these deeds were done not well,
 But to the doers most unhappily.
 If well accorded, the connubial state

From all its strings speaks perfect harmony ;
 If ill, at home, abroad, the harsh notes jar, 625
 And with rude discord wound the ear of Peace.

CHO. That Peace to wound always our sex was
 born,
 Augmenting by our ills the ills of men.

TYN. What ! dost thou brave me, and in proud
 defiance

So answer, as to pierce my heart with grief? 630
 This pride will fire me more to urge thy death.

One honest task I'll add to that which drew me
 Hither ; to grace my murder'd daughter's tomb,
 This instant to the assembled Argives go,
 And rouse the willing state, an easy task, 635

To crush thee and thy sister : she deserves,
 Ev'n more than thou, to die, whose accursed tongue
 Added new fierceness to thy fierce intents ;

Thine ears assailing with some bitter speech,
 That Agamemnon's shade haunted her dreams ; 640

That the tremendous powers below abhorr'd
 The adulterous bed, foul ev'n to man's gross sense,
 Till all this house blazed in the flame she kindled.

I tell thee, Menelaus, and I will do it,
 If thou regard my hate or my alliance, 645

Protect him not, by the just gods I charge thee,
 But leave him to the rigour of the laws,
 Or never dare to tread on Spartan ground.

Hear me, and mark me ; league not with the vile,
 Nor scorn thy friends, whose breasts with virtue
 glow. 650

Here, my attendants, lead me from this house.

ORESTES, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

ORES. Why get thee gone, that I may plead to
 him,

Uninterrupted by thy wayward age.

Why dost thou bend that way, then backward
 turn

Thoughtful thy step, absorb'd in anxious care ? 655

MEN. Forbear, and leave me to my thoughts, perplex'd
And unresolved which cause I should espouse.

ORES. Suspend awhile thy judgment; hear me first,
First hear my plea; weigh it, and then resolve.

MEN. Speak; thou hast reason: wisdom sometimes loves, 660
To dwell with silence, sometimes woos the ear.

ORES. Then let me urge my plea: and, O! forgive me

If I seem tedious: grief is fond of words.
Give me not aught of thine; only return
What from my father's grace thou hast received.
I ask not thy rich treasures, yet a treasure 666
Richer than all thy stores; I ask my life.

Is this unjust? Let me from thee receive
Something unjust: such Agamemnon was,
Who led to Troy the united arms of Greece: 670
Yet was the wrong not his; but to avenge
Thy wife's incontinent and foul offence.

For all his dangers, all his toils in war,
Borne as becomes a friend, in a friend's cause,
Give me one day for his ten years in arms. 675

To vindicate thy honour, one short day
Stand firm, my friend, the guardian of my life.
For thee Aulis my poor sister died;
I am content, nor ask Hermione
A sacrifice for me: in my distress 680

Protect me, pity me: I ask no more;
To my unhappy father grant my life,
And save my sister, save her virgin years.

The house of Agamemnon sinks with me.
Impossible thou'lt say. When danger threatens, 685
The friend comes forth resolved, and shields his
friend.

In fortune's golden smiles what need of friends?
Her favouring power wants no auxiliary.
Greece sees thou lovest thy wife: I speak not this

In flattery, to wind into thy bosom ; 690
 But I conjure thee by that love—Ah me!
 How am I fallen! Not for myself alone
 I pour my prayer, but for my father's house.
 Now by the kindred blood, whose royal tide
 Rolls in thy veins ; by each endearing tie 695
 Of fond relation and fraternal love,
 Think that my murder'd father's injured shade
 Burst from the realms of death, and hovers o'er
 thee ;
 And think, O, think the words I speak are his.
 'Tis for my life I plead ; life's dear to all, 700
 With sighs, with groans, with tears : save me, O,
 save me !

CHO. Low at thy knees a woman joins her prayer :
 O, save them, save the unhappy, for thou canst !

MEN. I hold thee dear, Orestes, and am willing
 To give my friendly aid in thy distress. 705
 The affinity of blood calls loudly on us
 To share its toils, if the gods grant the power,
 Nor shrink appall'd at danger or at death ;
 And much I wish the gods would grant this power :
 But with a thousand toils oppress'd I come, 710
 And lift a single spear, whose glittering point
 No squadrons follow wedged in firm array :
 Few my remaining friends, and small my force
 With Argos then should we engage in arms,
 We could not conquer ; but with gentle words 715
 Perchance we may : this way Hope smiles on us.
 Who would with feeble forces aim at deeds
 Of perilous proof? 'Twere folly to attempt it.
 When, roused to rage, the maddening populace
 storms,
 Their fury, like a rolling flame, bursts forth 720
 Unquenchable ; but give its violence way,
 It spends itself ; and, as its force abates,
 Learns to obey, and yields it to your will
 Their passions varying thus, now rough with rage,
 Now melting with soft pity, Wisdom marks 725

The change, and turns it to a rich account.
 Thus Tyndarus I will move, and the Argive state
 To use their supreme power with gentleness.
 The gallant bark, that too much swells her sails,
 Oft is o'erset ; but let her pride be lower'd, 730
 She rides secure, and glories in the gale.
 Impetuous rage is hateful to the gods,
 Hateful to men : with cool, unpassioned reason
 (Discretion gides my words) I must preserve thee,
 And not, as thou perchance mayst deem, by force.
 Against the stronger what can force avail ? 736
 Its trophies can my single spear erect
 Victorious o'er the ills that now assault thee ?
 To be a suitor hath not been my use
 At Argos, but Necessity will teach us, 740
 If wise, submission to the power of Fortune.

ORESTES, CHORUS.

ORES. Thou doughty champion of thy wife, good
 else
 For naught, in thy friend's cause a coward base,
 Thus dost thou slight me, turn thee thus away ?
 Are Agamemnon's favours thus repaid ? 745
 Thou hadst no friend, my father, in thy ills.
 Ah me ! I am betray'd ; ev'n Hope forsakes me,
 And leaves me unprotected to my fate,
 Who on his sheltering power alone relied.
 But from his Phocians, see, with hasty step 750
 Here comes a friend indeed, my Pylades,
 A pleasing sight ; for in distress, a friend
 Comes like a calm to the toss'd mariner.

PYLADES, ORESTES, CHORUS.

PYL. With swift pace speed I through the city,
 hearing
 Their counsels, and discerning their intents 755
 To adjudge thee and thy sister to quick death.
 But what ! How fares my friend ? What thy de-
 sign ?

Thou partner of my soul, companion dear,
Friend, kinsman, brother: thou art all to me

ORES. To speak my woes in brief then, we are
lost. 760

PYL. Then in thy ruin is thy friend involved.

ORES. The Spartan views us with malignant eye.

PYL. A vile wife to a husband match'd as vile.

ORES. To me no joy doth his arrival bring.

PYL. Is he indeed then at this land arrived? 765

ORES. Late, but soon found unfaithful to his friends.

PYL. And brought he his disloyal wife with him?

ORES. In truth he brought not her, but she brought
him.

PYL. Where is this pest, that hath unpeopled
Greece?

ORES. Here in my house, if I may call it mine.

PYL. What to thy father's brother didst thou
say? 771

ORES. Not to see me and my poor sister slain.

PYL. Now by the gods, what answer did he give?

ORES. Timid and cautious, like a faithless friend.

PYL. With what excuses his denial cloaked? 775

ORES. The father of these female worthies came.

PYL. Incensed and chafing for his daughter's
death?

ORES. Ev'n so: for him my father was disdain'd.

PYL. And wants he courage here to assert thy
cause?

ORES. No warrior he, but among women brave.

PYL. Then have thy woes their full weight: thou
must die. 781

ORES. First the deciding vote must pass against us.

PYL. Deciding what? I tremble as I ask.

ORES. Or life, or death. Few words speak great
events.

PYL. Fly then, and with thy sister leave this
house. 785

ORES. Seest thou the guards that close their wea-
pons round?

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PYL. Each street I saw, each pass secured with arms.

ORES. We are invested, like a sea-girt town.

PYL. Mine also is misfortune, ruin mine.

ORES. Ruin! from whence? Thy ills augment my woes. 790

PYL. My father in his rage hath banish'd me.

ORES. What, on some public, or a private charge?

PYL. As impious, aiding in thy mother's death.

ORES. Unhappy, shalt thou suffer in my ills?

PYL. I shall not, like the Spartan, shrink from them. 795

ORES. Like mine, should Argos meditate thy death?

PYL. They have no right; I am no subject here.

ORES. The many, when bad rulers prompt to ill, Regard no rights.

PYL. But when good lead to good, Their counsels well advised breathe temperate wisdom. 800

ORES. Well, be it so. But shall we now consult Our common good?

PYL. Propose the important theme.

ORES. To urge my plea before them.

PYL. Vindicate Thy deed as righteous?

ORES. Righteous, as avenging My father's blood.

PYL. Harshly, I fear, their brows 805 Will frown upon thee.

ORES. Should fear hold me mute, And yield me tame to death?

PYL. Unmanly that.

ORES. What should I do?

PYL. Hast thou, remaining here, Prospect of safety?

ORES. Safety dwells not here.

PYL. In going hast thou hope?

ORES. Should it take well,
It might succeed. 811

PYL. Attempt it boldly then ;
Go: if to die, 'tis nobler to die there.

ORES. My cause is just.

PYL. Would Heaven they so may think!

ORES. Thus I avoid the charge of guilty fear.
Some one, indignant at my father's death, 815
Perchance may pity me.

PYL. I see it all,
And the bright lustre thy high birth throws round
thee.

ORES. I will not stay, and, like a coward slave,
Die tamely here.

PYL. I praise thy noble spirit.

ORES. But to my sister shall we make this known?

PYL. No, I conjure thee.

ORES. She would be all tears. 821

PYL. Avoid the omen then: in silence go;
Nor let her grief unseasonably detain thee.

ORES. Yet one distress afflicts me: should the
Furies

Rouse all their terrors, and affright my soul. 825

PYL. My care shall watch around thee.

ORES. To attend

A man disorder'd thus, to guard, to hold him,
Is an displeasing office.

PYL. But for thee

Delightful to my love.

ORES. Yet have a care

Lest my contagious phrensy seize on thee. 830

PYL. No more of phrensy.

ORES. Wilt thou not be shock'd

At this hard task?

PYL. No office shocks a friend.

ORES. Be thou my pilot then,—

PYL. A welcome charge.

ORES. And guide my footsteps to my father's
tomb,

That I may pour my supplications there, 835
And move his shade to aid me.

PYL. Pious this,
And just.

ORES. But from my mother's lead me far:
Let me not see it.

PYL. All is hostile there.
But haste thee, ere the fatal vote be pass'd.
Lean on me; let me throw my arm around thee, 840
'Thus hold thee, thus support thy feeble limbs,
And bear thee through the crowd of gazing eyes
Regardless. Where shall friendship show its faith,
If now in thy afflictions I forsake thee? 844

ORES. This is to have a friend; compared to this,
What are the ties of blood? The man who melts
With social sympathy, though not allied,
Is than a thousand kinsmen of more worth.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

The exalted state, the imperial power,
Which spread o'er Greece its ample sway, 850
And girt with war, on the barbaric shore
Taught the proud streams of Simois to obey,
Withdraw their glories. Discord (as of old
Fierce mid the sons of Tantalus she rose,
And for the rich ram fleeced with gold 855
Prepared the feast of horrid woes;
Whence Vengeance bared the flaming sword,
And blood for blood remorseless pour'd)
Now through the house of Atreus lords it wide, 859
And, fill'd with carnage, swells her sanguine pride.

ANTISTROPHE.

Honour is honour now no more,
Since with fierce rage he dared invade
His parent's breast; and, his hand stain'd with gore.
Waved to the golden sun his crimson blade.

864 It was the custom of the ancients, when any one had

Ill actions are displeasing to the skies, 865
 And moon-eyed Folly marks them for her own.
 Heardst thou not Clytemnestra's cries,
 Her thrilling shrieks, her dying moan?
 "The mother by the son to bleed!
 Ah, dare not; 'tis an impious deed: 870
 Nor, in wild reverence to thy father's name,
 Blot with eternal infamy thy fame!"

EPODE.

Is there, in all Heaven's angry store,
 Misfortune, sorrow, sickness, pain,—
 Is there an ill that racks, that tortures more, 875
 Than by the unpyting son the parent slain?
 Ah, spare, unhappy youth, thy mother spare!—
 'Tis done: like vultures see the Furies rise,
 And rend his soul with wild despair:
 See how he rolls his haggard eyes! 880
 When from her gold-embroider'd vest
 Suppliant she bared her heaving breast,
 Ah, couldst thou strike?—He struck (O deed ab-
 horr'd!)
 And ruthless in her bosom plunged the sword.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. Ye virgins, hath the poor Orestes, struck
 With madness from the gods, rush'd from the
 house? 886

CHO. Not so; but to the assembled state of
 Argos

He goes, resolved to strive in this hard contest,
 Where life to him and thee, or death's the prize.

ELEC. Ah me! what hath he done? Who coun-
 sell'd this? 890

CHO. Pylades: but this messenger will tell thee
 All that hath pass'd touching thy brother there.

avenged himself by the slaughter of another, with justice and
 honour as he thought, to wave his bloody sword to the sun, as
 if he made the gods witnesses of his innocence.

MESSENGER, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

MES. Unhappy daughter of that mighty chief,
Who led the powers of Greece, revered Electra,
How shall my tongue disclose this tale of wo! 895

ELEC. Ah me! we are no more: thy faltering
voice

In broken accents speaks the tragic tale.

MES. Ev'n so: the fatal sentence is pronounced:
This day thy brother and thyself must die.

ELEC. Long have my fears, presaging this event,
With mournful expectation sunk my heart. 901

But was there no debate? Whose ruling voice
Procured this sentence? Tell me, good old man,
Arm they their hands with stones? Or by the
sword

Together sink we in one common death? 905

MES. I left my rural cottage, and the gates
Of Argos enter'd, with fond wish to learn
To thee and to Orestes what had chanced,
Prompted by that high reverence which I bore
Thy father; for his house supported me, 910

Though poor, yet not unfaithful. Soon I saw
The thronging people hurry to that height,
Where, as they say, Ægyptus gave them seats
When Danaus was adjudged to punishment.
Astonish'd at the sight, I ask'd if war 915

New threatening roused the city thus: an Argive
Gave answer,—“Seest thou not Orestes there?
He goes to plead his cause; and life or death
Hangs on his voice.” I look'd, and near me saw
(O piteous spectacle! what least I hoped 920

To see) thy brother: as he walk'd, his eyes
Fix'd on the ground, his fever-weaken'd limbs
Supported by his friend, whose faithful care,
Touch'd with like grief, guided his feeble steps.
Soon as the assembly sat, the herald's voice 925

Proclaim'd free speech to all who will'd to speak,
Whether Orestes for his mother slain

Should die, or not. Talthybius first arose,
 Who with thy father storm'd the towers of Troy.
 Double and dark his speech, as one who lives 930
 The slave of greatness : to thy father high
 Respect he paid : but, to thy brother's praise
 Silent, in honourable terms involved
 His ill intent, as that he modell'd laws
 'Gainst parents not beseeming ; but his eye 935
 Always glanced cheerful on Ægisthus' friends :
 For such their nature ; the warm shine of Fortune
 Allures them, vassals to the rich and great.
 Next rose the royal Diomed ; his voice
 Allow'd not death, but exile, to atone 940
 The deed : discordant clamours echo'd round,
 As approbation prompted, or dislike.
 An Argive, not an Argive, next arose ;
 His birth barbaric, of licentious tongue,
 Presumptuous, turbulent, and prompt to lead, 945
 With empty noise, the populace to ill :
 For the smooth tongue, that charms to mischief,
 bears
 A pestilent power ; while Wisdom, aiming still
 At virtue, brings its honourable thought,
 Though late, to glorious issue : her grave voice 950
 Authority, that owes its best grace to it,
 Should countenance, and check the factious tongue :
 This wretch, suborn'd by Tyndarus, clamour'd loud
 For death, the harshest death, involving thee
 In the same ruin : but another rose 955
 Of different sentiment : no sightly gaud,
 But one in whose plain form the eye might note
 A manly, free, direct integrity,
 Temper'd with prudence ; one who rarely join'd
 The city circles ; in his small domain, 960
 Which his own culturing hand had taught to smile,

943 The poet is here supposed to reflect on the factious Cleophon, who, though of Athenian parents, was born in Thrace.

Passing in honest peace his blameless days :
 His voice to Agamemnon's son decreed
 A crown, his noble father who avenged,
 By slaying that abandon'd, impious woman, 965
 Whose vile deeds check'd the soldier's generous
 flame ;

For who in distant fields, at Honour's call,
 Would wield his martial arms, if in his absence
 Pollution stain his wife, and his pure bed
 Be made a foul sty of adulterous lust ? 970

The virtuous all approved. Orestes now,
 Preventing further argument, advanced,
 And thus address'd them :—" Ye illustrious Argives,
 Who from a line of ancient heroes draw
 Your high-born race, to vindicate your honour, 975
 Not less than to avenge my father's death,
 I did this deed : for should the husband's blood
 Leave on the wife's hand no foul stain, full soon
 The purple tide would flow, or you must sink
 (O shame to manhood !) vile slaves to your wives.

Now she, that to my father's bed was false, 981
 Hath died for it : if you require my life,
 The law hath lost its force ; and who shall say
 His own life is secure, as these bold deeds
 From frequency draw force, and mock at justice ?"

These truths were lost in air, and that vile talker, 986
 Whose malice call'd for death to both, prevail'd.

Harsh was the sentence, and the unhappy youth
 Scarce gain'd this sad indulgence, leave to die
 By his own hand this day : thou too must die. 990

Him from the assembly Pylades with tears
 Leads this way, by a few, a faithful few
 Accompanied, whose eyes, melting with pity,
 Rain bitter dew : he comes, a dismal sight, 994

To pierce thy soul with grief. But haste, prepare
 The sword ; thou too must die : thy high-born
 race

Avails not, nor the oracle of Phœbus,
 Whose fatal answer brings destruction on you.

CHO. Why, miserable virgin, dost thou bend
 Thy clouded eye to the earth? Why silent thus?
 Give thy griefs voice, and let thy sorrows flow. 1001

ELECTRA.

STROPHE.

Yes, I will let my sorrows flow,
 And give to grief the melancholy strain;
 And, as the mournful notes complain
 With all the heart-felt agony of wo, 1005
 These hands my bleeding cheeks shall tear,
 And beat this head in wild despair,
 Devoted to the queen, that rules beneath
 The realms of darkness and of death.
 Daughters of Argos, with loud shrieks deplore 1010
 The house of Atreus, now no more;
 Fallen, by too severe a fate,
 From the proud glories of its splendent state.

ANTISTROPHE.

Low, low they lie, the imperial line,
 The imperial race of Pelops, vanish'd, gone; 1015
 No trace remains, no name, no son:
 Their vaunted honours in the dust decline.
 From envious gods these ruins come,
 And the harsh city's bloody doom.
 Short is the day of life, each little hour 1020
 With toils, with miseries clouded o'er:
 Should brightening Hope, to cheer the troubled day,
 Pour through the gloom a transient ray,
 Fate comes, and o'er the darken'd scene
 Spreads the deep horrors of its dreary reign. 1025

EPODE.

O, for an eagle's wing, whose rapid flight
 Might bear me to the ethereal height,
 Where, to Olympus fix'd, the golden chain
 Suspends the ponderous, trembling mass:
 There should my wo-wild notes complain 1030
 To the hoar author of my race.

CHO. But see, thy brother, by the Argive state
 Condemn'd to bleed, advances slow; and with him
 The faithful Pylades with a brother's love
 Shares in his griefs, and guides his feeble steps.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

ELEC. Ah me! my brother, while I yet behold
 thee,

Let me indulge my grief, ere yet the tomb, 1065
 Yet ere the solemn pyre in its black shade
 Wraps our dead limbs, let me indulge my grief,
 My frantic grief; fix my fond eyes on thee,
 That never, never must behold thee more.

ORES. Wilt thou not cease these womanish wail-
 ings, meet 1070

This harsh decree with silence, and abide,
 Firmly abide, the rigour of our fate?

ELEC. Can I be silent, when our eyes no more
 Shall see yon golden sun's irradiate light?

ORES. Kill me not thou: forbear: enough of
 death 1075

Have I already from the hands of Argos.

ELEC. Thy youth I mourn, and thy untimely death:
 Life was thy due, when, ah! thou art no more.

ORES. Now by the gods, throw not this softness
 round me,

Nor make the unmanly tear drop at our woes. 1080

ELEC. We die; and shall the tear not flow? That
 dew

Pity will shed o'er the lost joys of life.

ORES. This day must we needs die: prepare we
 then

The sword, or other instrument of death. 1084

ELEC. My brother, do thou kill me; let no Argive
 Touch with his rude hand Agamemnon's daughter.

ORES. No; in thy mother's blood I have enough;
 I shed not thine: but by thy own hand die.

ELEC. I will, and not desert thy honest sword.
 But let me throw my fond arms round thy neck.

ORES. Vain is the joy, if yet it be a joy, 1091
In death to sooth thee with a last embrace.

ELEC. My brother! O that dearest, best-loved
name!

Dear to thy sister, partner of my soul!

ORES. Why wilt thou melt me thus? And yet I
wish, 1095

Returning thy embrace, to fold thee close,
Close in my arms; nor modesty forbids:
It is my sister: let me clasp thee then,
And press thee to my bosom, fondly press thee.
This sweet exchange of love is all our woes 1100
Allow us for the names of wedded joys.

ELEC. O, may the same sword end us, the same
tomb

Close in its cedar hearsement our cold limbs!

ORES. That would be joy: but destitute of friends,
Who shall inurn us in one common tomb? 1105

ELEC. Did Menelaus my father then betray?
Did not the wretch plead earnest thy life?

ORES. He durst not show his false eye; but, his
hopes

Fix'd on the sceptre, fear'd to save his friends.
But let us in our death give shining proof 1110
Of our illustrious birth: my hand shall show
My high nobility, and plunge the sword
Intrepid through my breast: dare thou the like.
Thou, Pylades, be umpire of our death;
With decent care compose our breathless limbs,
And lay them in my father's sepulchre. 1116
Farewell. I go to execute the deed.

PYL. Yet stay: one charge against thee must I
bring,

Shouldst thou but hope I would survive thy death.

ORES. And what avails it that thou die with me?

PYL. Without thy converse what can life avail?

ORES. Thou hast not slain thy mother: I slew
mine. 1122

PYL. I shared the deed: the suffering I should
share.

ORES. O, save thee for thy father ; die not with me :

Thou hast a country ; that name's lost to me : 1125

Thou hast a father's house, hast greatness, wealth.

If this ill-fated maid, whom to thy arms,

The sanction of our friendship, I betrothed ;—

If she be lost, some other nuptial bed

Awaits to bless thee with a father's joys. 1130

Our dear relation is no more : my friend,

Thou, whose sweet converse was my soul's delight,

Farewell : for thee the joys of life remain ;

To us they wither in the shade of death.

PYL. Wide from my honest purpose dost thou stray.

May not the fertile earth, nor the bright air 1136

Receive my blood, if ever I forsake thee,

To spare myself if ever I forsake thee !

Together I design'd, together wrought

Thy mother's death, which draws this fate on thee :

Together will I die with thee and her : 1141

Dear to my soul, affianced to my bed,

I deem her as my wife. Should I return

To Delphi, the high citadel of Phocis,

Dare I name honour, if united thus 1145

While Fortune favour'd your high state, but now

The false friend shrink from your adversity ?

Not so : these things demand my deep regard.

Yet, ere we die, some measure let us form

To afflict with grief the heart of Menelaus. 1150

ORES. Let me see that, my friend ; then let me die !

PYL. Be then advised, and let the keen sword wait.

ORES. Shall then my just revenge burst on his head.

PYL. No more : these women,—I distrust their faith.

ORES. They are all truth, all friendship ; fear them not. 1155

PYL. Let us slay Helen: that would grieve his soul.

ORES. How? I approve it, be it nobly done.

PYL. Let the sword end her: in my house she lurks.

ORES. She doth, and seals its treasures for her own.

PYL. Espoused to Pluto, she will seal no more.

ORES. But how, around her that barbaric train?

PYL. What are they? For of Phrygians naught I dread. 1162

ORES. Marshals of mirrors and cosmetic washes.

PYL. Brings she these Trojan gewgaws back to Greece?

ORES. Greece! 'Tis a paltry spot; she breathes not in it. 1165

PYL. Well may the free disdain a host of slaves.

ORES. To achieve this deed, twice would I die with joy.

PYL. Twice would I die, might I thy vengeance aid.

ORES. Disclose thy purpose, and accomplish it.

PYL. We enter as in readiness to die. 1170

ORES. Thus far I comprehend thee, but no more.

PYL. To her with loud laments bewail our fate.

ORES. To extort the tear, though her heart bounds with joy.

PYL. This be her hour: the next may we enjoy.

ORES. How then to execute the destined deed?

PYL. Bear we our swords conceal'd beneath our vests. 1176

ORES. But can destruction reach her mid her train?

PYL. Confined apart, naught shall that crew avail.

ORES. And if one dares to clamour, let him die.

PYL. In that the immediate exigence will guide us. 1180

ORES. The death of Helen then, that is the word.

PYL. Agreed. That Honour dictates this, now hear.

To draw the sword against a virtuous woman

Would blot our names with infamy. Her blood
 All Greece demands, for sons, for fathers slain 1185
 In her cursed cause, for the deep sigh that rends
 The widow'd matron's desolated heart.

Shouts of applause would rend the air, thick fires
 Blaze to the gods, and many a fervent prayer
 Draw blessings on our heads. No longer call'd
 The murderer of thy mother, thou shalt hear 1191
 The applauding voice of Greece with triumph hail
 thee

Revenger of the mischief-working Helen.
 What, shall the treacherous Menelaus then smile,
 Proud of his high success ; and, while thy father,
 Thyself, thy sister fall, thy mother too 1196

(But I forbear ; for Honour, at her name,
 Dims its pale fires) ; seize thy rich-treasured house
 As his inheritance, and with joyous heart
 Clasp his fair wife, by Agamemnon's spear 1200
 Recover'd to his arms ? Let me not live,
 If I not draw the gloomy sword against her.
 Failing in this, we'll set the house on flames,
 And nobly in the blazing ruins die.

One must succeed : the glory shall be ours, 1205
 To die with honour, or with honour live.

CHO. This guilty fair, a scandal to her sex,
 Merits the abhorrence of each virtuous dame.

ORES. Life hath no blessing like a prudent friend,
 Than treasured wealth more precious, than the
 power 1210

Of monarchs, and the people's loud applause.
 Thou on Ægisthus guidedst my just rage,
 Nor in my dangers wast thou absent ; now
 Thou givest me vengeance on mine enemies,
 Nor shrinks thy firm foot back. But I forbear, 1215
 Nor with intemperate praise thine ear offend.

I will not tamely die, but in my fall
 Pull ruin on my foes : they too shall weep,
 The traitors ! they shall have their share of wo.
 The illustrious Agamemnon was my sire, 1220

Imperial chief of Greece ; no tyrant he,
 But clothed with the awful power of the just gods.
 I will not blot his splendours, like a slave
 Crouching to death ; but with a liberal pride
 Throw life away, first glorying in revenge. 1225
 Whiche'er succeeds, we triumph : yet if thence
 Despair force safety ; if the sword should glance
 From us and wound their breasts, I have my wish :
 Transport is in the thought ; and the light words,
 Charged with no costly pleasure, sooth my soul.

ELEC. And this suggests a thought ; which lifts my
 mind 1231

To hope success and safety to us all.

ORES. The prescience of a god inspires thy voice.
 But how ? O, say ; for wisdom too is thine.

ELEC. Then hear : and thou, my brother, mark my
 words. 1235

ORES. Speak : there is pleasure in the hope of
 good.

ELEC. The daughter of this Helen dost thou know ?

ORES. The fair Hermione, our mother's charge ?

ELEC. She now is gone to Clytemnestra's tomb.

ORES. With what intent ? Thy words awaken
 hope. 1240

ELEC. To pour libations for her mother there.

ORES. As means of safety dost thou tell me this ?

ELEC. Her, when she enters, as a hostage seize.

ORES. And what relief can thy thoughts hope from
 her. 1245

ELEC. If Menelaus shall for his slaughter'd wife
 Attempt revenge on thee, or me, or him
 (For the close bond of friendship makes us one),
 Tell him that thou wilt kill Hermione,
 And hold the drawn sword to the virgin's breast :
 If, trembling for his daughter, when he sees 1250
 His wife all weltering in her blood, he saves
 Thy life, the virgin give him back unhurt ;
 But should his wild ungovernable rage
 Demand thy life, plunge deep the unpitying steel.

Yet I am well assured, his rage, though fierce 1255
 At first, will soften soon ; for nature form'd him
 Nor bold, nor brave : this then I deem the fort
 That guards our lives. You have what I advise.

ORES. Thou excellence, that to the form divine,
 The sweet attractive charm of female grace, 1260
 Hast join'd a manly spirit, shalt thou die ?
 Shalt thou, my friend, deplore her loss, with whom,
 Accomplish'd as she is, a life of love
 Were happiness supreme ?

PYL. Would Heaven indulge
 My warm wish, tower'd Phocis should receive her,
 With golden Hymen smiling in our train. 1266

ORES. When will Hermione return ? Our toils,
 If we can take the young one, must succeed,
 And gloriously entangle the old savage.

ELEC. Each moment, such the distance, I expect
 her. 1270

ORES. 'Tis well. My sister, my Electra, wait
 Here, and receive the virgin. Let thine eye
 Keep wary watch ; if friend, or partisan,
 Or ev'n my father's brother to the house
 Approach to hinder us, some signal give, 1275
 Or beat the door, or raise thy thrilling voice.
 And now, my friend, still faithful to my toils,
 Address we to this great emprise, and entering
 Each with the sword of justice, arm our hands.
 And thou, who in the gloomy house of night 1280
 Hast thy sad dwelling, father, royal shade,
 Thy son, Orestes, calls thee ; at my prayers
 Assistant come : for thee these sufferings fall
 Unjustly on my head, for my just deeds.
 Betray'd by thy base brother, 'gainst his wife 1285
 My stern intents are bent : aid our revenge.

ELEC. Father, if in the realms beneath thou hear
 Thy children call, O, come ! for thee we die.

1289 Anaxibia, the wife of Strophius, and mother of Pylades,
 was the sister of Agamemnon.

PYL. Spirit of Agamemnon, kindred shade, 1289
Hear me too, hear thy suppliant : save thy children !

ORES. I slew my mother.

PYL. My hand touch'd the sword.

ELEC. And my bold counsels prompted to the
deed.

ORES. To avenge thee, father.

ELEC. Nor did I betray thee.

PYL. Hear this, indignant shade, and save thy
children ! 1294

ORES. Accept the oblation of these tears.

ELEC. Accept
These groans.

PYL. Now cease ; and haste we to the deed.
If to the realms beneath prayers wing their way,
He hears. Thou, Jove, our great progenitor,
Awfully just, to him, to me, to her
Extend thy guardian power : this trinal band 1300
One cause, one safety, or one ruin joins ;
We live together, or together die.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELECTRA.

Virgins of high Pelasgian race,
Achaia's pride, Mycenæ's grace !

CHORUS.

Why, royal maid, these plaintive strains ? 1305
That name, that title yet remains.

ELECTRA.

Divide, divide ; with careful view
Watch you the street, the entrance you.

CHORUS.

And why to us this task assign'd ?
Unfold, sweet friend, unfold thy mind. 1310

ELECTRA.

Lest any, standing near the gate,
Find in this scene of blood her fate.

SEMICHORUS I.

Haste, to your stations quickly run :
My watch be towards the rising sun.

SEMICHORUS. II.

Be mine with cautious care address'd 1315
To where he sinks him in the west.

ELECTRA.

Now here, now there, now far, now nigh,
Quick-glancing dart the observant eye.

SEMICHORUS I.

With fond affection we obey,
Our eyes quick-glancing every way. 1320

ELECTRA.

Glance through that length of hair, which flows
Light-waving o'er your shaded brows.

SEMICHORUS I.

This way a man comes hastening down :
His garb bespeaks a simple clown.

ELECTRA.

Undone, undone, should he disclose 1325
These couch'd, arm'd lions to their foes.

SEMICHORUS I.

He passes on, suppress thy fear ;
And all this way again is clear.

ELECTRA TO SEMICHORUS II.

And that way doth no footstep rude
Disturb the wish'd-for solitude ? 1330

SEMICHORUS II.

This way no rude step beats the ground ;
But all is still, all safe around.

ELECTRA.

Patience exhausted bears no more :
Near will I listen at the door.
Favour'd with silence, why so slow 1335
To let the purple torrent flow ?

Blinded by beauty's dazzling ray,
Do your charm'd swords refuse to obey ?
They hear not. Roused at these alarms,
Some Argive soon will rush in arms ; 1340
And in her aid vindictive spread
Horror and ruin on our head.

Watch, virgins, watch with strictest care :
Repose hath nothing to do here.

CHORUS.

With transverse watch our heedful eye 1345
Each various way—

HEL. Io, Pelasgian Argos, I am slain! [*within.*

ELEC. Hark! their bold hands are in the bloody
act.

It was the cry of Helena, I deem. 1349

CHO. O Jove, eternal power, hear us, and ever
Protect our friends!

HEL. My dearest Menelaus,
I die; where art thou? fly, O, fly to save me!

ELECTRA.

Kill, slay, strike, wound, despatch, destroy :
With iron smiles of gloomy joy
Plunge deep the huge tempestuous blade, 1355
For blood, for death, for carnage made,
Deep in her breast. She basely fled
Her father's house, her husband's bed.
Hence many a Greek in battle slain
Lies mouldering on the Phrygian plain; 1360
Hence, to call forth the bursting tear,
The arrowy shower, the hurtling spear;
And hence Scamander's silver flood
Whirls his swoln eddies stain'd with blood.

CHORUS.

Hark! hark! I hear the sound of feet: 1365
The marble pavement now they beat.

ELEC. While slaughter is at work, my virgin
friends,

Hermione comes: cease we the measure then:
She walks into our toils, a goodly prize.

Silent resume your stations; fix'd your eye, 1370
Let not your countenance betray the deed.

My eye shall take again its mournful cast,
As unacquainted with this havoc here.

HERMIONE, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. From Clytemnestra's tomb comest thou,
virgin,
Thy hallow'd offerings and libations paid? 1375

HER. I have appeased her shade. But from this
house

The voice of loud lament ere my approach
Struck my astonish'd ear: it makes me tremble.

ELEC. Well it beseems us: we have cause for
cries.

HER. Be thy voice tuned to good. Is there aught
new? 1380

ELEC. Orestes and myself are doom'd to die.

HER. Be it not so, by blood to me allied!

ELEC. Necessity lays its iron yoke on us.

HER. For this did these laments sound from the
house?

ELEC. Suppliant at Helen's feet he raised the cry.
Her. Who? for my knowledge on thy words de-
pends. 1386

ELEC. The poor Orestes, for his life and mine.

HER. Just cause for lamentation hath this house.

ELEC. Can Nature know a stronger? But come
thou;

Join in the supplications of thy friends; 1390
Fall at thy mother's knees (how bless'd her state!)
That Menelaus allow not that we die.

O thou, who from my mother's hand receivedst
Thy infant nurture, look with pity on us,
Our woes alleviate, to the trial go: 1395
My foot shall lead, sweet prop of all our hopes!

HER. And willingly I follow: if my voice,
My prayers, my power avail, ye shall not die.

ELEC. You there within the house, ye armed
friends,
Will you not seize your prey?

HER. Ah, who are these 1400
Terrible to mine eye ?

ORES. No noise, no cry : [*advancing.*
To us, not to thyself, thou bringest safety.

ELEC. Here seize her, seize her ; to her trembling
breast

Point your keen swords, and awe her into silence.
Let Menelaus perceive that he hath found men, 1405
Not Phrygian slaves ; men, whose bold spirits dare
Retort his foul wrongs on his own base head.

[*They lead her off.*

Now, my loved virgins, raise your voices high ;
Before the house ring out the notes of wo,
That this bold deed spread no alarm, nor call 1410
The astonish'd Argives to these royal gates,
Till I see Helen rolling in her blood,
Or from the slaves attending learn her fate.

CHORUS.

Justice unsheathed her awful sword,
And Vengeance snatch'd it from her hand : 1415
From heaven her rapid flight she pour'd,
And plunged in Helen's breast the glittering brand :
For this accursed, this fatal fair
Fill'd Greece with many a mournful tear,
Since the pernicious Phrygian boy 1420
Enamour'd bore her wanton charms to Troy.

Hush, hush ! the palace door resounds ; break off :
A Phrygian slave comes forth : learn we from him
What fate hath wrought within.

PHRYGIAN, CHORUS.

PHRYGIAN.

The Grecian sword from death I fled ; 1425
In these barbaric sandals was my flight,
Climbing the pillar's sculptured head,
And o'er the cedar rafter's height :

For the unkind earth refused to save
 A flying, a barbaric slave. 1430
 Whither, ah, whither shall I fly
 (O, say, ye virgin strangers, say) ?
 Mount the gray regions of the sky,
 Or through the foaming billows dash my way,
 Where, the firm globe encircling wide, 1435
 Vex'd Ocean rolls his roaring tide ?

CHO. Servant of Helen, Phrygian, whence these
 cries ?

PHRYGIAN.

O Ilium, Ilium ! Wo, wo, wo !
 Ye towers, the fertile Phrygia's stately boast !
 O sacred Ida's pine-crown'd brow ! 1440
 I mourn, I mourn your glories lost :
 For you these doleful notes complain,
 A mournful, a barbaric strain.
 From Leda's egg, the swan her sire,
 The beauteous, baleful Helen rose ; 1445
 Whose eye on heaven-built Troy glares fire,
 And the rich seat of Ganymede o'erthrows
 Hence flows, for chiefs, for heroes slain,
 The mournful, the barbaric strain.

CHO. No longer hold us in suspense ; relate 1450
 Each circumstance : conjecture errs from truth.

PHRY. It is the song of death : your pardon then
 That I indulged the melancholy strain.
 In Asia with barbaric voice we raise
 These notes of wo, when by the ruthless sword 1455
 The blood of kings is shed upon the earth.
 But to my tale. Of lion port came in
 Two of your Grecians ; father to the one,
 The illustrious leader of your troops ; and one
 The son of Strophius, of deep reserve, 1460
 And dangerous, dark design : such was the chief
 Of Ithaca, but faithful to his friends,
 In battle bold, and in the works of war

Of sage experience ; as a dragon fierce ;
 Perdition on his silence, which conceal'd 1465
 Designs of death ! Together they advanced
 To the bright queen whom Paris call'd his wife,
 Their eyes suffused with tears, humble their mien ;
 And at her knees, on each side one, they fell,
 Besieging her : back start the slaves, back starts 1470
 Each Phrygian minister, some fearing fraud,
 More unsuspecting some : while others thought
 This dragon, crimson'd with his mother's blood,
 The beauteous Spartan in his toils enclosed.

CHO. Where then wast thou ? Hadst thou first
 fled through fear ? 1475

PHRY. I then was standing, in our Phrygian mode,
 Was standing near, and with the feather'd fan
 Raised the soft gales to breathe upon her cheeks,
 In our barbaric mode, to bid their breath
 Sport in the ringlets of her waving hair. 1480
 Her curious fingers guide the thread, the spoils
 Of Phrygia, whose rich texture form'd the woof
 To adorn the purple pall, a mournful present
 To Clytemnestra. With mild voice Orestes
 Entreats her to arise, and go with him 1485
 To an age-honour'd altar, in old times
 The seat of Pelops, his great ancestor,
 That she might hear his words : he led her, ah !
 He led her : unprophetic of her fate,
 She follow'd. The vile Phocian, his compeer, 1490
 Seized the occasion, and with stern command
 Bade us be gone ; then, dragg'd to separate cells,
 Confined us from our royal mistress far.

CHO. What terrible event ensued ? O, say !

PHRY. Goddess of Ida, potent, potent queen ! 1495
 What scenes of blood, what impious deeds these
 eyes,
 These eyes amid the royal rooms beheld !
 Each in his fierce hand grasp'd the sword conceal'd
 Beneath their purple vests, his fiery glance,
 Heedful of interruption, darting round ; 1500

Then, like two mountain boars, before the queen
They stood, and thunder'd,—“Thou shalt die, shalt
die :

Thy coward husband kills thee, who in Argos
Betrays his brother's family to death.”
She shriek'd aloud, and, raising her white arm, 1505
In miserable manner beat her head ;
Then bent her golden-sandal'd feet to flight.
But rushing fierce, Orestes in her hair
Lock'd his rude hand ; and, bending to the left 1509
Her head, prepared to plunge the impetuous sword
Deep in her throat.

CHO. Where were her Phrygians then ?
They ran, belike, on all sides to her aid.

PHRY. Roused by her cries, we burst the bars, and
each
From forth his separate cell rush'd to her aid :
Some in their hasty hands snatch'd stones, some
seized 1515

The beamy spear, the unwieldy falchion some,
'Gainst us in dreadless rage the Phocian came,
Fierce as the Trojan Hector, fierce as Ajax,
Whose triple-crested helm I saw, I saw
Dreadfully waving in the gates of Priam. 1520
Clashing our swords met his : but then, O, then
Was seen, how weak, how spiritless our arms,
Opposed in fight against the force of Greece :
One hasty running, dying one, one gash'd
With wounds, wild with affright another bends, 1525
Imploring mercy : sheltering in the dark
We fly, and all was terror, blood, and death.
Just as the uplifted sword threaten'd to shed
Her mother's blood on the earth, Hermione came ;
Swift with unhallow'd rage they dart on her, 1530
And seize their trembling prey ; then turn again
To execute the work of death on Helen.

Meanwhile, O heaven ! O earth ! O day ! O night !
Forth from the chamber through the vestibule,
Whether by some enchantment, by the power 1535

Of magic, or the stealth of favouring gods,
She vanish'd. What hath happen'd since I know
not,

Intent on hasty flight to save myself.
For all his toils, all his distressful toils,
Barren return hath Menelaus received, 1540
And led his beauteous wife from Troy in vain.

CHO. Terror succeeds to terror; for mine eyes
Behold Orestes there before the house
Walk with disorder'd pace, and grasp his sword.

ORESTES, PHRYGIAN, CHORUS.

ORES. Where is the slave, who this way fled my
sword? 1545

PHRY. Low at thy feet (such our barbaric use)
Thus prostrate, I implore thy mercy, king.

ORES. This is not Ilium, but the land of Greece.

PHRY. In any land life to the wise is sweet.

ORES. Hast thou raised cries to call the Spartan's
aid? 1550

PHRY. Thee rather would I aid: more worthy
thou.

ORES. This Helen then, with justice did she die?

PHRY. Most justly: had she three lives, she should
lose them.

ORES. Thy servile fear smooths thy dissembling
tongue.

PHRY. No: should she live, who wasted Greece
and Troy? 1555

ORES. Swear (I will kill thee else) thou flatter'st
not.

PHRY. Now by my life I swear, sincerely swear.

ORES. Was the steel dreadful thus to all at Troy?

PHRY. Keep thy sword off: near, it glares terror
to me.

ORES. Freeze not to stone, as seen the Gorgon's
head. 1560

PHRY. Let me not die; no Gorgon's head I know.

ORES. Fears a slave death, the end of all his ills?

PHRY. To slave or free sweet is the light of heaven.

ORES. Well urged: thy wisdom saves thee: go
thou in. 1564

PHRY. Thou wilt not kill me then?

ORES. In safety go.

PHRY. Thy words breathe music.

ORES. But I may retract

This lenity.

PHRY. No music breathes in that.

ORES. Fool, if thou think'st thy blood shall stain
my sword,

Nor woman thou, nor in the scale of men.

To stop thy clamours came I: Argos soon 1570

Is roused at every noise. For Menelaus,

We fear him not; our swords shall welcome him:

Let him then come, proud of his golden locks

That wanton o'er his shoulders. Should he raise

The men of Argos, and for Helen's death 1575

Lead them against this house, and menace me,

My sister, and my friend,—he shall behold

His daughter, with his wife, weltering in blood.

CHORUS.

SEMICHORUS I.

Other horrors, other woes

Rise this royal house to enclose. 1580

SEMICHORUS II.

Haste we then to spread the alarm,

Or keep silence, shunning harm?

SEMICHORUS I.

See the sudden smoke arise,

Waving tidings to the skies!

SEMICHORUS II.

From the torch that dusky wreath 1585

Threatens ruin, flames, and death.

CHORUS.

What event the gods assign,

Mortal, to submit is thine.

Here some stern, relentless power
 Bade the horrid ruin roar, 1590
 When the blood-stain'd car beneath
 Myrtilus lay roll'd in death.

But see, with hasty step the Spartan comes,
 Inform'd, belike, of these rough deeds of death.
 Quick, quick, ye royal youths, make fast these
 gates, 1595
 Prevent the foe ; for to the unfortunate,
 Like thee, Orestes, dreadful are the wrongs
 Of insolent and rude prosperity.

MENELAUS *below*, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, HER-
 MIONE *above*, CHORUS.

MEN. I heard the horrid and atrocious deeds
 Of these two lions, men I call them not : 1600
 My wife not dead, I hear, but disappear'd.
 This idle rumour I received from one,
 Bewilder'd with his fears ; the bitter scoff,
 The artifice of him that slew his mother.
 Open the gates here : slaves, I speak to you ; 1605
 Unbar the gates, that I, at least, may save
 My daughter from their bloody hands, and bear
 My poor lost wife away, whose murderers
 This vengeful hand should recompense with death.

ORES. Stand off ; forbear. Spartan, I speak to
 thee 1610
 Towering in pride : dare but to touch the gate,
 I will rend down this ancient pinnacle
 That crowns the battlements, and crush thy head.
 The gates are shut, and barricaded strong,
 To guard me from thy efforts and thy friends'. 1615

MEN. Ha ! what is this ? What mean these
 blazing torches ?
 Why on the battlements this station fix'd ?
 Why at my daughter's bosom points that sword ?
 ORES. Is it thy will to question, or to hear me ?

MEN. Neither ; but by compulsion I must hear thee. 1620

ORES. Be thou assured, thy daughter I will kill.

MEN. Thou hast kill'd Helen : wilt thou shed my blood ?

ORES. Would I had kill'd her, nor the gods beguiled me !

MEN. Her murder dost thou tauntingly deny ?

ORES. With sorrow I deny it : 'twas my wish.

MEN. What to have done ? Thy words excite my fear. 1626

ORES. To sacrifice this baleful pest of Greece.

MEN. Give me the body that I may entomb it.

ORES. Ask of the gods : but I will kill thy daughter.

MEN. The mother slain, wilt thou add blood to blood ? 1630

ORES. To avenge my father ; yet betray'd by thee.

MEN. Art thou not sated with thy mother's blood.

ORES. Never with punishing such impious women.

MEN. And art thou, Pylades, accomplice with him ? 1634

ORES. His silence speaks : sufficient my reply.

MEN. But short thy joy, unless thou fly on wings.

ORES. We will not fly ; but we will fire the house.

MEN. Thy father's royal seat in ruin sink ?

ORES. That it may ne'er be thine ; and at the flames

Her will I sacrifice.

MEN. Ay, kill her, do ; 1640

I will have vengeance, ample vengeance on thee.

ORES. Thus, then.

MEN. Ah, stay thee : do not, do not kill her !

ORES. Be silent now, and with composure bear
The afflictions, which with justice light on thee.

MEN. What ! is it justice then that thou shouldst live ? 1645

ORES. Live ! ay, and reign.

MEN. Where wouldst thou reign ?

ORES. In Argos,
Pelasgian Argos.

MEN. At the sacred rites
Well would those hands the cleansing lavers touch ;

ORES. And wherefore not ?

MEN. And, ere the spear is raised,
Offer the hallow'd victim !

ORES. Dost not thou ? 1650

MEN. And well ; my hands are pure.

ORES. But not thy heart.

MEN. Who will hold converse with thee ?

ORES. He that loves
His father.

MEN. He, too, who reveres his mother ?

ORES. Happy his state.

MEN. Unhappy then is thine.

ORES. Because such impious women I abhor. 1655

MEN. Take, from my daughter's bosom take thy
sword.

ORES. False are thy words.

MEN. My daughter wilt thou kill ?

ORES. Now thou speak'st truth.

MEN. Ah me, what shall I do ?

ORES. Go to the Argives, and persuade them—

MEN. What

Shall I persuade them ?

ORES. Ask the state to spare 1660

Our lives.

MEN. Or you will kill my daughter ?

ORES. Ay.

MEN. Unhappy Helen !

ORES. Am not I unhappy ?

MEN. From Troy I brought thee to be butcher'd
here.

ORES. Would it were so !

MEN. After a thousand toils—

ORES. But not for me.

MEN. These dreadful ills fall on me. 1665

ORES. Thou hadst no will to serve me.

MEN. Thou hast caught me.

ORES. No ; by thy baseness thou hast caught thyself.

But go, Electra, fire the house below :
And thou, my Pylades, my faithful friend,
Set from these battlements the roof on fire. 1670

MEN. Arm, arm, ye sons of Greece ; ye warlike
Argives,
Fly to my aid. Despair of life, and guilt,
Stain'd with his mother's blood, prompt his bold
hand
In one wide ruin to involve the city.

APOLLO.

Cease, Menelaus ; forbear this fiery rage : 1675
Apollo speaks : revere the present god.

And thou, Orestes, whose uplifted sword
Threatens that virgin's life, forbear, and hear.
Her whom thy rage, to work him wo, assail'd,
This radiant form in tissued clouds enshrined, 1680
Snatch'd from thy sword I saved ; such the com-
mand

Of heaven's high king : his beauteous progeny
Soars above mortal fate ; and, orb'd in heaven,
Immortal mid her kindred stars she shines,
Beaming kind influence on the mariners. 1685

Lead to thy royal house another wife ;
Since by her beauty the just gods awoke
'Twixt Greece and Troy the rage of war, to free
The groaning earth from impious multitudes.
Such is the fate of Helen. Thou, Orestes, 1690

Quitting this country, in Parrhasia's plains
For one revolving year thy dwelling fix,
And give the place thy name : that honour share
With Azan and with Arcas. Pass from thence
To Athens ; there against the Furies urge 1695
Thy plea ; acquit thee of thy mother's blood :
There, in that awful court, the gods shall sit
Thy judges, and thy just cause shall prevail.

Her, at whose throat thy angry sword was pointed,
The gods decree thy wife : though Pyrrhus dreams
Of nuptial joys, the Delphic sword awaits him ; 1701
My vengeance to Achilles this demands.

To Pylades thy sister is betrothed ;
Give him his bride : and happiness attends
To pour her blessings on their future years. 1705

Thou, Menelaus, yield that Orestes reign
At Argos : haste to Sparta ; reign thou there,
And wear that crown, the dowry of thy wife,
The well-earn'd meed of all the toils she caused
thee.

It shall be mine to appease the state to him, 1710
Compell'd by my command to slay his mother.

ORES. Thou god of oracles, prophet of good,
True are thy words and faithful. Yet my soul
Was struck with horror, lest some vengeful power
Spoke this, which I misdeem'd thy voice divine.
But all is well. Obedient to thy word, 1716
I drop the sword ; and if her father gives her,
Wish to receive Hermione my bride.

MEN. Daughter of Jove, bright Helen, hail ! thy
state,
Mid the blessed mansions of the immortal gods, 1720
I reverence. Now, Orestes, give I thee
My daughter, at the bidding of the god.

Illustrious in thy race, thou takest a wife
Not less illustrious : blessings on thy hand 1724
'That takes her, and on mine that gives her to thee !

APOL. Each now depart, as I commanded : cease
Your strife.

MEN. To obey is ours.

ORES. Such are my thoughts.
Now, Menelaus, to all these evils pass'd
My soul speaks peace, and to thy oracles.

APOL. Go then your ways, now go, and reverence
Peace, 1730
Most beauteous of the gods. I will conduct
The immortal Helen to the house of Jove

O'er yon star-spangled sky, to the bright seats,
Where, with majestic Juno, and the bloom
Of Hebe ever young, Alcides' joy, 1735
A goddess she shall hear the vows of mortals :
And, honour'd with the twin-born sons of Jove,
Guide the toss'd mariners, and rule the sea.

CHO. O Victory, I revere thy sober triumphs :
Thus ever guard, thus ever crown my life !

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

IPHIGENIA.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

THOAS.

HERDSMAN.

MESSENGER.

MINERVA.

CHORUS of Grecian women, captives, attendants on Iphigenia in the temple.

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

ARGUMENT.

THE reader, in this play, will renew his acquaintance with the amiable but unhappy Iphigenia, from the altar at Aulis she is here represented as removed by Diana to her temple in the Tauric Chersonese, where she is reluctantly compelled to preside as priestess over the cruel and bloody rites there established by Thoas, the king of that country, who is accustomed to sacrifice all strangers, on their arrival in his dominions. Orestes and his friend Pylades land on this inhospitable coast, to obtain possession of the statue of Diana, in obedience to the oracle of Apollo: they are seized, and carried to the king, who sends them in chains to the priestess as victims to the goddess: their death, which seems inevitable, is prevented by the recognition of Orestes and his sister. Iphigenia now conspires with the two friends to escape from this barbarous country, and to convey the divine statue to Athens; which design is happily effected; while the rage of Thoas against the accomplices of their flight, and his eagerness of pursuit, are effectually restrained by the appearance of Minerva, who makes known to him the future destinies of the fugitives.— [The scene is in the court of the temple of Diana.]

IPHIGENIA.

To Pisa, by the fleetest coursers borne,
Comes Pelops, son of Tantalus, and weds
The virgin daughter of CEnomaus:
From her sprung Atreus; Menelaus from him,
And Agamemnon; I from him derive 5
My birth, his Iphigenia, by his queen,
Daughter of Tyndarus. Where frequent winds
Swell the vex'd Euripus with eddying blasts,
And roll the darkening waves, my father slew me,
A victim to Diana, so he thought, 10
EURIP. VOL. III.—T

For Helen's sake, its bay where Aulis winds,
 To fame well known; for there his thousand ships,
 The armament of Greece, the imperial chief
 Convened, desirous that his Greeks should snatch
 The glorious crown of victory from Troy, 15
 And punish the base insult to the bed
 Of Helen, vengeance grateful to the soul
 Of Menelaus. But 'gainst his ships the sea
 Long barr'd, and not one favouring breeze to swell
 His flagging sails, the hallow'd flames the chief 20
 Consults, and Calchas thus disclosed the fates :—
 "Imperial leader of the Grecian host,
 Hence shalt thou not unmoor thy vessels, ere
 Diana as a victim shall receive
 Thy daughter Iphigenia: what the year 25
 Most beauteous should produce, thou to the queen
 Dispensing light didst vow to sacrifice :
 A daughter Clytemnestra in thy house
 Then bore (the peerless grace of beauty thus
 To me assigning); her must thou devote 30
 The victim." Then Ulysses by his arts,
 Me, to Achilles as design'd a bride,
 Won from my mother. My unhappy fate
 To Aulis brought me; on the altar there
 High was I placed, and o'er me gleam'd the sword,
 Aiming the fatal wound: but from the stroke 36
 Diana snatch'd me, in exchange a hind
 Giving the Grecians; through the lucid air
 Me she conveyed to Tauris, here to dwell,
 Where o'er barbarians a barbaric king 40
 Holds his rude sway, named Thoas, whose swift
 foot
 Equals the rapid wing: me he appoints
 The priestess of this temple, where such rites
 Are pleasing to Diana, that the name
 Alone claims honour; for I sacrifice 45
 (Such, ere I came, the custom of the state)
 Whatever Grecian to this savage shore
 Is driven: the previous rites are mine; the deed

Of blood, too horrid to be told, devolves
 On others in the temple : but the rest, 50
 In reverence to the goddess, I forbear.
 But the strange visions which the night now past
 Brought with it, to the air, if that may sooth
 My troubled thought, I will relate. I seem'd,
 As I lay sleeping, from this land removed, 55
 To dwell at Argos, resting on my couch
 Mid the apartments of the virgin train.
 Sudden the firm earth shook : I fled, and stood
 Without ; the battlements I saw, and all
 The rocking roof fall from its lofty height 60
 In ruins to the ground : of all the house,
 My father's house, one pillar, as I thought,
 Alone was left, which from its cornice waved
 A length of auburn locks, and human voice
 Assumed : the bloody office, which is mine 65
 To strangers here, respecting, I to death,
 Sprinkling the lustral drops, devoted it
 With many tears. My dream I thus expound :—
 Orestes, whom I hallow'd by my rites,
 Is dead : for sons are pillars of the house ; 70
 They, whom my lustral lavers sprinkle, die
 I cannot to my friends apply my dream,
 For Strophius, when I perish'd, had no son.
 Now, to my brother, absent though he be,
 Libations will I offer : this, at least, 75
 With the attendants given me by the king,
 Virgins of Greece, I can : but what the cause
 They yet attend me not within the house,
 The temple of the goddess, where I dwell ?

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORES. Keep careful watch, lest some one come
 this way. 80
 PYL. I watch, and turn mine eye to every part.
 ORES. And dost thou, Pylades, imagine this
 The temple of the goddess, which we seek,
 Our sails from Argos sweeping o'er the main ? 84

PYL. Orestes, such my thought, and must be thine.

ORES. And this the altar wet with Grecian blood?

PYL. Grimson'd with gore behold its sculptured wreaths.

ORES. See, from the battlements what trophies hang!

PYL. The spoils of strangers that have here been slain. 89

ORES. Behooves us then to watch with careful eye.

O Phœbus, by thy oracles again

Why hast thou led me to these toils? E'er since,

In vengeance for my father's blood, I slew

My mother, ceaseless by the Furies driven,

Vagrant, an outcast, many a bending course 95

My feet have trod: to thee I came, of thee

Inquired this whirling phrensy by what means,

And by what means my labours I might end.

Thy voice commanded me to speed my course

To this wild coast of Tauris, where a shrine 100

Thy sister hath, Diana; thence to take

The statue of the goddess, which from heaven

(So say the natives) to this temple fell:

This image, or by fraud or fortune won,

The dangerous toil achieved, to place the prize 105

In the Athenian land: no more was said;

But that, performing this, I should obtain

Rest from my toils. Obedient to thy words,

On this unknown, inhospitable coast

Am I arrived. Now, Pylades (for thou 110

Art my associate in this dangerous task),

Of thee I ask, What shall we do? for high

The walls, thou seest, which fence the temple round.

Shall we ascend their height? But how escape

Observing eyes? Or burst the brazen bars? 115

Of these we nothing know: in the attempt

To force the gates, or meditating means

To enter, if detected, we shall die.

Shall we then, ere we die, by flight regain

The ship in which we hither plough'd the sea? 120

PYL. Of flight we brook no thought, nor such
hath been

Our wont; nor may the god's commanding voice
Be disobey'd; but from the temple now
Retiring, in some cave, which the black sea
Beats with its billows, we may lie conceal'd 125
At distance from our bark, lest some, whose eyes
May note it, bear the tidings to the king,
And we be seized by force. But when the eye
Of night comes darkling on, then must we dare,
And take the polish'd image from the shrine, 130
Attempting all things: and the vacant space
Between the triglyphs (mark it well) enough
Is open to admit us; by that way
Attempt we to descend: in toils the brave
Are daring; of no worth the abject soul. 135

ORES. This length of sea we plough'd not, from
this coast,
Nothing effected, to return: but well
Hast thou advised; the god must be obey'd.
Retire we then where we may lie conceal'd;
For never from the god will come the cause, 140
That what his sacred voice commands should fall
Effectless. We must dare. No toil to youth
Excuse, which justifies inaction, brings.

IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

IPHIGENIA.

You, who your savage dwellings hold
Nigh this inhospitable main, 145
'Gainst clashing rocks with fury roll'd,
From all but hallow'd words abstain.
Virgin queen, Latona's grace,
Joying in the mountain chase,
To thy court, thy rich domain, 150
To thy beauteous-pillar'd fane
Where our wondering eyes behold
Battlements that blaze with gold,

Thus my virgin steps I bend,
 Holy, the holy to attend ; 155
 Servant, virgin queen, to thee ;
 Power, who bear'st life's golden key,
 Far from Greece for steeds renown'd,
 From her walls with towers crown'd,
 From the beauteous-planted meads 160
 Where his train Eurotas leads,
 Visiting the loved retreats,
 Once my father's royal seats.

CHORUS.

I come. What cares disturb thy rest ?
 Why hast thou brought me to the shrine ?
 Doth some fresh grief afflict thy breast ? 166
 Why bring me to this seat divine ?
 Thou daughter of that chief, whose powers
 Plough'd with a thousand keels the strand,
 And ranged in arms shook Troy's proud towers
 Beneath the Atridæ's great command ! 171

IPHIGENIA.

O ye attendant train,
 How is my heart oppress'd with wo !
 What notes, save notes of grief, can flow,
 A harsh and unmelodious strain ? 175
 My soul domestic ills oppress with dread,
 And bid me mourn a brother dead.
 What visions did my sleeping sense appal
 In the past dark and midnight hour !
 'Tis ruin, ruin all. 180
 My father's house,—it is no more :
 No more is his illustrious line.
 What dreadful deeds hath Argos known !
 One only brother, Fate, was mine ;
 And dost thou rend him from me ? Is he gone
 To Pluto's dreary realms below ? 186
 For him, as dead, with pious care
 This goblet I prepare ;
 And on the bosom of the earth shall flow
 Streams from the heifer mountain-bred, 190

The grapes rich juice, and, mix'd with these,
 The labour of the yellow bees,
 Libations soothing to the dead.
 Give me the oblation : let me hold
 The foaming goblet's hallow'd gold. 195

O thou, the earth beneath,
 Who didst from Agamemnon spring ;
 To thee, deprived of vital breath,
 I these libations bring.
 Accept them : to thy honour'd tomb, 200
 Never, ah ! never shall I come ;
 Never these golden tresses bear,
 To place them there, there shed the tear ;
 For from my country far, a hind 204
 There deem'd as slain, my wild abode I find.

CHORUS.

To thee thy faithful train
 The Asiatic hymn will raise,
 A doleful, a barbaric strain,
 Responsive to thy lays,
 And steep in tears the mournful song,— 210
 Notes, which to the dead belong ;
 Dismal notes, attuned to wo
 By Pluto in the realms below :
 No sprightly air shall we employ 214
 To cheer the soul, and wake the sense of joy.

IPHIGENIA.

The Atridæ are no more ;
 Extinct their sceptre's golden light ;
 My father's house from its proud height
 Is fallen : its ruins I deplore.
 Who of her kings at Argos holds his reign, 220
 Her kings once bless'd ? But Sorrow's train
 Rolls on impetuous for the rapid steeds
 Which o'er the strand with Pelops fly.
 From what atrocious deeds
 Starts the sun back, his sacred eye 225

Of brightness, loathing, turn'd aside ?
 And fatal to their house arose,
 From the rich ram, Thessalia's golden pride,
 Slaughter on-slaughter, woes on woes :
 Thence, from the dead ages past, 230
 Vengeance came rushing on its prey,
 And swept the race of Tantalus away.
 Fatal to thee its ruthless haste ;
 To me too fatal, from the hour
 My mother wedded, from the night 235
 She gave me to life's opening light,
 Nursed by affliction's cruel power.
 Early to me, the Fates unkind,
 To know what sorrow is assign'd :
 Me Leda's daughter, hapless dame, 240
 First blooming offspring of her bed
 (A father's conduct here I blame),
 A joyless victim bred ;
 When o'er the strand of Aulis, in the pride
 Of beauty kindling flames of love, 245
 High on my splendid car I move,
 Betrothed to Thetis' son a bride :
 Ah, hapless bride, to all the train
 Of Grecian fair preferr'd in vain !
 But now, a stranger on this strand, 250
 'Gainst which the wild waves beat,
 I hold my dreary, joyless seat,
 Far distant from my native land,
 Nor nuptial bed is mine, nor child, nor friend.
 At Argos now no more I raise 255
 The festal song in Juno's praise ;
 Nor o'er the loom sweet-sounding bend,
 As the creative shuttle flies ;
 Give forms of Titans fierce to rise ;
 And, dreadful with her purple spear, 260
 Image Athenian Pallas there :
 But on this barbarous shore
 The unhappy stranger's fate I moan,

The ruthless altar stain'd with gore,
 His deep and dying groan ; 265
 And, for each tear that weeps his woes,
 From me a tear of pity flows.
 Of these the sad remembrance now must sleep ·
 A brother dead, ah me ! I weep :
 At Argos him, by fate oppress'd, 270
 I left an infant at the breast,
 A beauteous bud, whose opening charms
 Then blossom'd in his mother's arms ;
 Orestes, born to high command,
 The imperial sceptre of the Argive land. 275

CHO. Leaving the sea-wash'd shore a herdsman
 comes
 Speeding, with some fresh tidings to thee fraught.

HERDSMAN, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

HERDS. Daughter of Agamemnon, and bright gem
 Of Clytemnestra, hear strange things from me.

IPH. And what of terror doth thy tale import ? 280

HERDS. Two youths, swift-rowing 'twixt the clash-
 ing rocks

Of our wild sea, are landed on the beach,
 A grateful offering at Diana's shrine,
 And victims to the goddess. Haste, prepare
 The sacred lavers, and the previous rites. 285

IPH. Whence are the strangers ? from what coun-
 try named ?

HERDS. From Greece : this only, nothing more, I
 know.

IPH. Didst thou not hear what names the strangers
 bear ?

HERDS. One by the other was call'd Pylades. 289

IPH. How is the stranger, his companion, named ?

HERDS. This none of us can tell : we heard it not.

IPH. How saw you them ? how seized them ? by
 what chance ?

HERDS. Mid the rude cliffs that o'er the Euxine
 hang—

IPH. And what concern have herdsman with the sea?

HERDS. To wash our herds in the salt wave we came. 295

IPH. To what I ask'd return: how seized you them?

Tell me the manner; this I wish to know:
For slow the victims come, nor hath some while
The altar of the goddess, as was wont, 299
Been crimson'd with the streams of Grecian blood.

HERDS. Our herds, which in the forest feed, we drove

Amid the tide that rushes to the shore,
'Twi't the Symplegades: it was the place,
Where in the rifted rock the chafing surge
Hath hallow'd a rude cave, the haunt of those 305

Whose quest is purple. Of our number there
A herdsman saw two youths, and back return'd
With soft and silent step; then pointing, said,
"Do you not see them? These are deities
That sit there." One, who with religious awe 310

Revered the gods, with hands uplifted pray'd,
His eyes fix'd on them,—“Son of the sea-nymph
Leucothoe, guardian of the labouring bark,
Our lord Palæmon, be propitious to us!

Or sit you on our shores, bright sons of Jove, 315
Castor and Pollux? Or the glorious boast
Of Nereus, father of the noble choir
Of fifty Nereids?” One, whose untaught mind

Audacious folly harden'd 'gainst the sense
Of holy awe, scoff'd at his prayers, and said,— 320
“These are wreck'd mariners, that take their seat:

In the cleft rock through fear, as they have heard
Our prescribed rite, that here we sacrifice
The stranger.” To the greater part he seem'd
Well to have spoken, and we judged it meet 325
To seize the victims, by our country's law

298 This is said to prevent suspicion: her former quickness to the herdsman might, she feared, discover her abhorrence of the rites.

Due to the goddess. Of the stranger youths,
 One at this instant started from the rock :
 Awhile he stood, and wildly toss'd his head,
 And groan'd, his loose arms trembling all their
 length, 330
 Convulsed with madness ; and a hunter loud
 'Then cried,—“ Dost thou behold her, Pylades ?
 Dost thou not see this dragon fierce from hell
 Rushing to kill me, and against me rousing
 Her horrid vipers ? See this other here, 335
 Emitting fire and slaughter from her vests,
 Sails on her wings, my mother in her arms
 Bearing, to hurl this mass of rock upon me !
 Ah, she will kill me ! Whither shall I fly ?”
 His visage might we see no more the same, 340
 And his voice varied ; now the roar of bulls,
 The howl of dogs now uttering, mimic sounds
 Sent by the maddening Furies, as they say.
 Together thronging, as of death assured,
 We sit in silence ; but he drew his sword, 345
 And, like a lion rushing mid our herds,
 Plunged in their sides the weapon, weening thus
 To drive the Furies, till the briny wave
 Foam'd with their blood. But when among our
 herds
 We saw this havoc made, we all 'gan rouse 350
 To arms, and blew our sounding shells to alarm
 The neighbouring peasants ; for we thought in fight
 Rude herdsmen to these youthful strangers, train'd
 To arms, ill match'd ; and forthwith to our aid
 Flock'd numbers. But, his phrensy of its force 355
 Abating, on the earth the stranger falls,
 Foam bursting from his mouth : but when he saw
 The advantage, each adventured on and hurl'd
 What might annoy him fallen : the other youth
 Wiped off the foam, took of his person care, 360
 His fine-wrought robe spread over him ; with heed
 The flying stones observing, warded off
 The wounds, and each kind office to his friend

Attentively perform'd. His sense return'd ;
 The stranger started up, and soon perceived 365
 The tide of foes that roll'd impetuous on,
 The danger and distress that closed them round.
 He heaved a sigh ; an unremitting storm
 Of stones we pour'd, and each incited each :
 Then we his dreadful exhortation heard :— 370
 “ Pylades, we shall die ; but let us die
 With glory : draw thy sword, and follow me.
 But when we saw the enemies advance
 With brandish'd swords, the steep heights crown'd
 with wood
 We fill in flight : but others, if one flies, 375
 Press on them ; if again they drive these back,
 What before fled turns, with a storm of stones
 Assaulting them ; but, what exceeds belief,
 Hurl'd by a thousand hands, not one could hit
 The victims of the goddess : scarce at length, 380
 Not by brave daring seized we them, but round
 We closed upon them, and their swords with stones
 Beat, wily, from their hands ; for on their knees
 They through fatigue had sunk upon the ground :
 We bare them to the monarch of this land : 385
 He view'd them, and without delay to thee
 Sent them devoted to the cleansing vase,
 And to the altar. Victims such as these,
 O virgin, wish to find ; for if such youths
 Thou offer, for thy slaughter Greece will pay, 390
 Her wrongs to thee at Aulis well avenged.

СНО. These things are wonderful, which thou hast
 told

Of him, whoe'er he be, the youth from Greece
 Arrived on this inhospitable shore.

ИРН. 'Tis well : go thou, and bring the strangers
 hither : 395

What here is to be done shall be our care.
 O my unhappy heart ! before this hour
 To strangers thou wast gentle, always touch'd
 With pity, and with tears their tears repaid,

When Grecians, natives of my country, came 400
 Into my hands : but from the dreams, which prompt
 To deeds ungentle, showing that no more
 Orestes views the sun's fair light, whoe'er
 Ye are that hither come, me will you find
 Relentless now. This is the truth, my friends : 405
 My heart is rent ; and never will the wretch,
 Who feels affliction's cruel tortures, bear
 Good-will to those that are more fortunate.
 Never came gale from Jove, nor flying bark,
 Which 'twixt the dangerous rocks of the Euxine sea
 Brought Helen hither, who my ruin wrought, 411
 Nor Menelaus ; that on them my foul wrongs
 I might repay, and with an Aulis here
 Requite the Aulis there, where I was seized,
 And, as a heifer, by the Grecians slain : 415
 My father too, who gave me birth, was priest.
 Ah me ! the sad remembrance of those ills
 Yet lives : how often did I stroke thy cheek,
 And, hanging on thy knees, address thee thus :—
 " Alas, my father ! I by thee am led 420
 A bride to bridal rites unblest'd and base :
 Them, while by thee I bleed, my mother hymns,
 And the Argive dames, with hymeneal strains,
 And with the jocund pipe the house resounds :
 But at the altar I by thee am slain ; 425
 For Pluto was the Achilles, not the son
 Of Peleus, whom to me thou didst announce
 The affianced bridegroom, and by guile didst bring
 To bloody nuptials in the rolling car."
 But, o'er mine eyes the veil's fine texture spread, 430
 This brother in my hands who now is lost,
 I clasp'd not, though his sister ; did not press
 My lips to his, through virgin modesty,
 As going to the house of Peleus : then
 Each fond embrace I to another time 435
 Deferr'd, as soon to Argos to return.
 If, O unhappy brother, thou art dead,
 From what a state, thy father's envied height
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Of glory, loved Orestes, art thou torn!—
 These false rules of the goddess much I blame: 440
 Whoe'er of mortals is with slaughter stain'd,
 Or hath at childbirth given assisting hands,
 Or chanced to touch aught dead, she as impure
 Drives from her altars; yet herself delights
 In human victims bleeding at her shrine. 445
 Ne'er did Latona from the embrace of Jove
 Bring forth such inconsistency: I then deem
 The feast of Tantalus, where gods were guests,
 Unworthy of belief, as that they fed
 On his son's flesh delighted; and I think 450
 These people, who themselves have a wild joy
 In shedding human blood, their savage guilt
 Charge on the goddess: for this truth I hold;
 None of the gods is evil, or doth wrong.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Ye rocks, ye clashing rocks, whose brow 455
 Frowns o'er the darken'd deeps below;
 Whose wild, inhospitable wave,
 From Argos flying and her native spring,
 The virgin once was known to brave,
 Tormented with the brize's maddening sting, 460
 From Europe when the rude sea o'er
 She pass'd to Asia's adverse shore;
 Who are these hapless youths, that dare to land,
 Leaving those soft, irriguous meads,
 Where, his green margin fringed with reeds, 465
 Eurotas rolls his ample tide,
 Or Dirce's hallow'd waters glide,
 And touch this barbarous, stranger-hating strand,
 The altars where a virgin dew,
 And blood the pillar'd shrine imbrues? 470

STROPHE II.

Did they with oars impetuous sweep
 (Rank answering rank) the foamy deep,

And wing their bark with flying sails,
 To raise their humble fortune their desire ;
 Eager to catch the rising gales, 475
 Their bosoms with the love of gain on fire ?
 For sweet is hope to man's fond breast ;
 The hope of gain, insatiate guest,
 Though on her oft attends Misfortune's train ;
 For daring man she tempts to brave 480
 The dangers of the boisterous wave,
 And leads him heedless of his fate
 Through many a distant barbarous state.
 Vain his opinions, his pursuits are vain !
 Boundless o'er some her power is shown, 485
 But some her temperate influence own.

ANTISTROPHE I.

How did they pass the dangerous rocks
 Clashing with rude, tremendous shocks ?
 How pass the savage-howling shore,
 Where once the unhappy Phineus held his reign, 490
 And sleep affrighted flies its roar,
 Steering their rough course o'er this boisterous
 main,
 Form'd in a ring, beneath whose waves
 The Nereid train in high arch'd caves
 Weave the light dance, and raise the sprightly song ;
 While, whispering in their swelling sails, 496
 Soft Zephyrs breathe, or southern gales
 Piping amid their tackling play,
 As their bark ploughs its watery way
 Those hoary cliffs, the haunts of birds, along, 500
 To that wild strand, the rapid race
 Where once Achilles deign'd to grace ?

ANTISTROPHE II.

O that from Troy some chance would bear
 Leda's loved daughter, fatal fair !

500 This rocky island, called Leucas, rises over against the Tauric Chersonese. Achilles celebrated some victory here with festive games : from him it was named Achillea.

(The royal virgin's vows are mine) 505
 That her bright tresses roll'd in crimson dew,
 Her warm blood flowing at this shrine
 The altar of the goddess might imbrue ;
 And Vengeance, righteous to repay
 Her former mischiefs, seize her prey ! 510
 But with what rapture should I hear his voice,
 If one this shore should reach from Greece,
 And bid the toils of slavery cease !
 Or might I in the hour of rest
 With pleasing dreams of Greece be bless'd ; 515
 So in my house, my native land rejoice ;
 In sleep enjoy the pleasing strain
 For happiness restored again !

IPH. But the two youths, their hands fast bound in
 chains,
 The late-seized victims to the goddess, come. 520
 Silence, my friends ; for, destined at the shrine
 To bleed, the Grecian strangers near approach ;
 And no false tidings did the herdsman bring.

CHO. Goddess revered, if grateful to thy soul
 This state presents such sacrifice, accept 525
 The victims, which the custom of this land
 Gives thee, but deem'd unholy by the Greeks.

IPHIGENIA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

IPH. No more ; that to the goddess each due rite
 Be well perform'd shall be my care. Unchain
 The strangers' hands ; that, hallow'd as they are, 530
 They may no more be bound. Go you, prepare
 Within the temple what the rites require.
 Unhappy youths, what mother brought you forth,
 Your father who ? Your sister, if perchance
 Ye have a sister, of what youths deprived ? 535
 For brother she shall have no more. Who knows
 Whom such misfortunes may attend ? For dark
 What the gods will creeps on ; and none can tell
 The ills to come : this fortune from the sight

Obscures. But, O unhappy strangers, say, 540
Whence came you? Sail'd you long since for this
land?

But long will be your absence from your homes,
For ever, in the dreary realms below.

ORES. Lady, whoe'er thou art, why for these
things

Dost thou lament? why mourn for ills, which soon
Will fall on us? Him I esteem unwise, 546

Who, when he sees death near, tries to o'ercome
Its terrors with bewailings, without hope

Of safety: ill he adds to ill, and makes

His folly known, yet dies. We must give way 550

To fortune; therefore mourn not thou for us:

We know, we are acquainted with your rites.

IPH. Which of you by the name of Pylades
Is call'd? This first it is my wish to know.

ORES. If aught of pleasure that may give thee, he.

IPH. A native of what Grecian state, declare. 556

ORES. What profit knowing this wouldst thou ob-
tain?

IPH. And are you brothers, of one mother born?

ORES. Brothers by friendship, lady, not by birth.

IPH. To thee what name was by thy father given?

ORES. With just cause I Unhappy might be call'd.

IPH. I ask not that; to fortune that ascribe. 562

ORES. Dying unknown, rude scoffs I shall avoid.

IPH. Wilt thou refuse? Why are thy thoughts so
high?

ORES. My body thou mayst kill, but not my
name. 565

IPH. Wilt thou not say a native of what state?

ORES. The question naught avails, since I must
die.

IPH. What hinders thee from granting me this
grace?

ORES. The illustrious Argos I my country boast.

IPH. By the gods, stranger, is thy birth from
thence? 570

ORES. My birth is from Mycenæ, once the bless'd.

IPH. Dost thou an exile fly, or by what fate ?

ORES. Of my free will, in part not free, I fly.

IPH. Wilt thou then tell me what I wish to know ? 574

ORES. Whate'er is foreign to my private griefs.

IPH. To my dear wish from Argos art thou come.

ORES. Not to my wish ; but if to thine, enjoy it.

IPH. Troy, whose fame spreads so wide, perchance thou know'st.

ORES. O that I ne'er had known her, ev'n in dreams ! 579

IPH. They say she is no more, by war destroy'd.

ORES. It is so : you have heard no false reports.

IPH. Is Helena with Menelaus return'd ?

ORES. She is ; and one I love her coming rues.

IPH. Where is she ? Me too she of old hath wrong'd. 584

ORES. At Sparta with her former lord she dwells.

IPH. By Greece, and not by me alone abhorr'd !

ORES. I from her nuptials have my share of grief.

IPH. And are the Greeks, as Fame reports, return'd ?

ORES. How briefly all things dost thou ask at once !

IPH. This favour, ere thou die, I wish to obtain.

ORES. Ask, then : since such thy wish, I will inform thee. 591

IPH. Calchas, a prophet,—came he back from Troy ?

ORES. He perish'd : at Mycenæ such the fame.

IPH. Goddess revered ! But doth Ulysses live ?

ORES. He lives, they say, but is not yet return'd. 595

IPH. Perish the wretch, nor see his country more ?

ORES. Wish him not ill, for all with him is ill.

IPH. But doth the son of sea-born Thetis live ?

ORES. He lives not: vain his nuptial rites at
Aulis. 599

IPH. That all was fraud, as those who felt it say.

ORES. But who art thou, inquiring thus of Greece ?

IPH. I am from thence, in early youth undone.

ORES. Thou hast a right to inquire what there
hath pass'd.

IPH. What know'st thou of the chief, men call the
bless'd ?

ORES. Who ? Of the bless'd was not the chief I
knew. 605

IPH. The royal Agamemnon, son of Atreus.

ORES. Of him I know not, lady ; cease to ask.

IPH. Nay, by the gods, tell me, and cheer my
soul.

ORES. He's dead, the unhappy chief : no single ill.

IPH. Dead ! By what adverse fate ? O wretched
me ! 610

ORES. Why mourn for this ? How doth it touch
thy breast ?

IPH. The glories of his former state I mourn.

ORES. Dreadfully murdered by a woman's hand.

IPH. How wretched she that slew him, he thus
slain ! 614

ORES. Now then forbear : of him inquire no more.

IPH. This only : lives the unhappy monarch's
wife ?

ORES. She, lady, is no more, slain by her son.

IPH. Alas, the ruin'd house ! What his intent ?

ORES. To avenge on her his noble father slain.

IPH. An ill, but righteous deed, how justly done !

ORES. Though righteous, by the gods he is not
bless'd. 621

IPH. Hath Agamemnon other offspring left ?

ORES. He left one virgin daughter, named Electra.

IPH. Of her that died a victim is aught said ? 624

ORES. This only, dead, she sees the light no more.

IPH. Unhappy she ! the father too who slew her !

ORES. For a bad woman she unseemly died.

IPH. At Argos lives the murdered father's son ?

ORES. Nowhere he lives, poor wretch ! and every-
where.

IPH. False dreams, farewell ; for nothing you im-
port. 630

ORES. Nor are those gods, that have the name of
wise,

Less false than fleeting dreams. In things divine,
And in things human, great confusion reigns.

One thing is left ; that, not unwise of soul,
Obedient to the prophet's voice he perish'd ; 635
For that he perish'd, they who know report.

CHO. What shall we know, what of our parents
know ?

If yet they live or not, who can inform us ?

IPH. Hear me : this converse prompts a thought,
which gives

Promise of good, ye youths of Greece, to you, 640
To these, and me : thus may it well be done,
If, willing to my purpose, all assent.

Wilt thou, if I shall save thee, go for me

A messenger to Argos, to my friends
Charged with a letter, which a captive wrote, 645

Who pitied me, nor murderous thought my hand,
But that he died beneath the law, these rites

The goddess deeming just ? for from that hour

I have not found who might to Argos bear
Himself my message, back with life return'd, 650

Or send to any of my friends my letter.

Thou, therefore, since it seems thou dost not bear
Ill-will to me, and dost Mycenæ know,

And those I wish to address, be safe, and live,
No base reward for a light letter, life 655

Receiving ; and let him, since thus the state
Requires, without thee to the goddess bleed.

ORES. Virgin unknown, well hast thou said in all
Save this, that to the goddess he should bleed

- A victim; that were heavy grief indeed. 660
 I steer'd the vessel to these ills; he sail'd
 Attendant on my toils: to gain thy grace
 By his destruction, and withdraw myself
 From sufferings, were unjust: thus let it be:
 Give him the letter; to fulfil thy wish, 665
 To Argos he will bear it: me let him
 Who claims that office, slay: base is his soul,
 Who in calamities involves his friends,
 And saves himself; this is a friend, whose life,
 Dear to me as my own, I would preserve. 670
- IPH. Excellent spirit! from some noble root
 It shows thee sprung, and to thy friends a friend
 Sincere; of those that share my blood if one
 Remains, such may he be! for I am not
 Without a brother, strangers, from my sight 675
 Though distant now. Since then thy wish is such,
 Him will I send to Argos; he shall bear
 My letter; thou shalt die; for this desire
 Hath strong possession of thy noble soul.
- ORES. Who then shall do the dreadful deed, and
 slay me? 680
- IPH. I: to atone the goddess is my charge.
- ORES. A charge unenvied, virgin, and unblest'd.
- IPH. Necessity constrains: I must obey.
- ORES. Wilt thou, a woman, plunge the sword in
 men? 684
- IPH. No: but thy locks to sprinkle round is mine.
- ORES. Whose then, if I may ask, the bloody deed?
- IPH. To some within the temple this belongs.
- ORES. What tomb is destined to receive my corse?
- IPH. The hallow'd fire within, and a dark cave.
- ORES. O, that a sister's hand might wrap these
 limbs! 690
- IPH. Vain wish, unhappy youth, whoe'er thou art,
 Hast thou conceived; for from this barbarous land
 Far is her dwelling. Yet, of what my power
 Permits (since thou from Argos draw'st thy birth),
 No grace will I omit: for in th tomb 695

I will place much of ornament, and pour
 The dulcet labour of the yellow bee,
 From mountain flowers extracted, on thy pyre.
 But I will go, and from the temple bring
 The letter; yet 'gainst me no hostile thought 700
 Conceive. You, that attend here, guard them well,
 But without chains. To one, whom most I love
 Of all my friends, to Argos I shall send
 Tidings perchance unlook'd for; and this letter,
 Declaring those whom he thought dead alive, 705
 Shall bear him an assured and solid joy.

PYLADES, ORESTES, CHORUS.

CHO. Thee, o'er whose limbs the bloody drops
 shall soon
 Be from the lavers sprinkled, I lament.

ORES. This asks no pity, strangers: but farewell.

CHO. Thee for thy happy fate we reverence,
 youth, 710

Who to thy country shall again return.

PYL. To friends unwish'd, who leave their friends
 to die.

CHO. Painful dismissal! Which shall I esteem
 Most lost, alas, alas! which most undone?
 For doubts my wavering judgment yet divide, 715
 If chief for thee my sighs should swell, or thee.

ORES. By the gods, Pylades, is thy mind touch'd
 In manner like as mine?

PYL. I cannot tell;
 Nor to thy question have I to reply.

ORES. Who is this virgin? With what zeal for
 Greece 720

Made she inquiries of us what the toils
 At Troy, if yet the Grecians were return'd,
 And Calchas, from the flight of birds who form'd
 Presages of the future. And she named
 Achilles: with what tenderness bewail'd 725
 The unhappy Agamemnon! Of his wife
 She ask'd me,—of his children: thence her race

This unknown virgin draws, an Argive ; else
 Ne'er would she send this letter, nor have wish'd
 To know these things, as if she bore a share 730
 (If Argos flourish) in its prosperous state.

PYL. Such were my thoughts (but thou hast given
 them words,
 Preventing me) of every circumstance,
 Save one : the fate of kings all know, whose state
 Holds aught of rank. But pass to other thoughts.

ORES. What ! Share them ; so thou best mayst
 be inform'd. 736

PYL. That thou shouldst die, and I behold this
 light,

Were base : with thee I sail'd, with thee to die
 Becomes me ; else shall I obtain the name
 Of a vile coward through the Argive state, 740

And the deep vales of Phocis. Most will think
 (For most think ill) that by betraying thee
 I saved myself, home to return alone ;
 Or haply that I slew thee, and thy death
 Contrived, that in the ruin of thy house 745

Thy empire I might grasp, to me devolved
 As wedded to thy sister, now sole heir.
 These things I fear, and hold them infamous.
 Behooves me then with thee to die, with thee
 To bleed a victim, on the pyre with thine 750
 To give my body to the flames ; for this
 Becomes me as thy friend, who dreads reproach.

ORES. Speak more auspicious words : 'tis mine to
 bear

Ills that are mine ; and single when the wo,
 I would not bear it double. What thou say'st 755
 Is vile and infamous, would light on me,

Should I cause thee to die, who in my toils
 Hast borne a share : to me, who from the gods
 Suffer afflictions which I suffer, death
 Is not unwelcome : thou art happy, thine 760
 An unpolluted and a prosperous house ;
 Mine impious and unblest'd : if thou art saved,

And from my sister (whom I gave to thee,
 Betroth'd thy bride) art bless'd with sons, my name
 May yet remain, nor all my father's house 765
 In total ruin sink. Go then, and live :
 Dwell in the mansion of thy ancestors :
 And when thou comest to Greece, to Argos famed
 For warrior-steeds, by this right hand I charge thee
 Raise a sepulchral mound, and on it place 770
 A monument to me ; and to my tomb
 Her tears, her tresses let my sister give ;
 And say, that by an Argive woman's hand
 I perish'd, to the altars bloody rites
 A hallow'd victim. Never let thy soul 775
 Betray my sister, for thou seest her state,
 Of friends how destitute, her father's house
 How desolate. Farewell. Of all my friends,
 Thee have I found most friendly, from my youth
 Train'd up with me, in all my sylvan sports 780
 Thou dear associate, and through many toils
 Thou faithful partner of my miseries.
 Me Phœbus, though a prophet, hath deceived,
 And, meditating guile, hath driven me far
 From Greece, of former oracles ashamed ; 785
 To him resign'd, obedient to his words,
 I slew my mother, and my meed is death.

PYL. Yes, I will raise thy tomb : thy sister's bed
 I never will betray, unhappy youth,
 For I will hold thee dearer when thou art dead, 790
 Than while thou livest ; nor hath yet the voice
 Of Phœbus quite destroy'd thee, though thou stand
 To slaughter nigh ; but sometimes mighty woes
 Yield mighty changes, so when Fortune wills.

ORES. Forbear : the words of Phœbus naught avail
 me ; 795
 For, passing from the shrine, the virgin comes.

IPHIGENIA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS.

IPH. Go you awa , and in the shrine prepare
[to the guards

What those, who o'er the rites preside, require.
 Here, strangers, is the letter folded close :
 What I would further, hear. The mind of man 800
 In dangers, and again, from fear relieved,
 Of safety when assured, is not the same :
 I therefore fear lest he, who should convey
 To Argos this epistle, when return'd
 Safe to his native country, will neglect 805
 My letter, as a thing of little worth.

ORES. What wouldst thou then? What is thy
 anxious thought?

IPH. This: let him give an oath that he will bear
 To Argos this epistle to those friends,
 To whom it is my ardent wish to send it. 810

ORES. And wilt thou in return give him thy oath?

IPH. That I will do, or will not do, say what.

ORES. To send him from this barbarous shore
 alive.

IPH. That's just: how should he bear my letter
 else?

ORES. But will the monarch to these things assent?

IPH. By me induced. Him I will see embark'd. 816

ORES. Swear then; and thou propose the righteous
 oath.

IPH. This, let him say, he to my friends will give.

PYL. Well, to thy friends this letter I will give.

IPH. Thee will I send safe through the darkening
 rocks. 820

PYL. What god dost thou invoke to attest thy
 oath?

IPH. Diana, at whose shrine high charge I hold.

PYL. And I heaven's potent king, the awful Jove.

IPH. But if thou slight thy oath, and do me wrong?

PYL. Never may I return. But if thou fail, 825
 And save me not?

IPH. Then never, while I live,
 May I revisit my loved Argos more!

PYL. One thing, not mention'd, thy attention
 claims.

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IPH. If honour owes it, this will touch us both.

PYL. Let me in this be pardon'd, if the bark 830
Be lost, and with it in the surging waves
'Thy letter perish, and I naked gain
The shore ; no longer binding be the oath.

IPH. Know'st thou what I will do ? For various
ills

Arise to those that plough the dangerous deep. 835
What in this letter is contain'd, what here
Is written, all I will repeat to thee,
That thou mayst bear my message to my friends.
'Gainst danger thus I guard : if thou preserve
The letter, that though silent will declare 840
My purport ; if it perish in the sea,
Saving thyself, my words too thou wilt save.

PYL. Well hast thou said touching the gods and
me.

Say then to whom at Argos shall I bear
This letter ? What relate as heard from thee ? 845

IPH. This message to Orestes, to the son
Of Agamemnon, bear :—She, who was slain
At Aulis, Iphigenia, sends thee this :
She lives, but not to those who then were there.

ORES. Where is she ? From the dead return'd to
life ? 850

IPH. She whom thou seest : but interrupt me
not.

To Argos, O my brother, ere I die,
Bear me from this barbaric land, and far
Remove me from this altar's bloody rites,
At which to slay the stranger is my charge.— 855

ORES. What shall I say ? Where are we, Pylades ?

IPH. Or on thy house for vengeance will I call,
Orestes. Twice repeated, learn the name.

ORES. Ye gods !

IPH. In my cause why invoke the gods ?

ORES. Nothing : proceed : my thoughts were wan-
dering wide : 860

Strange things of thee unask'd I soon shall learn.

IPH. Tell him the goddess saved me, in exchange
 A hind presenting, which my father slew
 A victim, deeming that he plunged his sword
 Deep in my breast: me in this land she placed. 865
 Thou hast my charge: and this my letter speaks.

PYL. O, thou hast bound me with an easy oath:
 What I have sworn with honest purpose, long
 Defer I not, but thus discharge mine oath.
 'To thee a letter from thy sister, lo, 870
 I bear, Orestes; and I give it thee.

ORES. I do receive it, but forbear to unclosethe
 Its foldings, greater pleasure first to enjoy
 Than words can give. My sister, O most dear,
 Astonish'd ev'n to disbelief, I throw 875
 Mine arms around thee with a fond embrace,
 In transport at the wondrous things I hear.

CHO. Stranger, thou dost not well with hands profane
 Thus to pollute the priestess of the shrine,
 Grasping her garments hallow'd from the touch. 880

ORES. My sister, my dear sister, from one sire,
 From Agamemnon sprung, turn not away,
 Holding thy brother thus beyond all hope.

IPH. My brother! Thou my brother! Wilt thou not
 Unsay these words? At Argos far he dwells. 885

ORES. Thy brother, O unhappy! is not there.

IPH. Thee did the Spartan Tyndarus bring forth?

ORES. And from the son of Pelops' son I sprung.

IPH. What say'st thou? Canst thou give me proof
 of this? 889

ORES. I can: ask something of my father's
 house.

IPH. Nay, it is thine to speak, mine to attend.

ORES. First let me mention things which I have
 heard

Electra speak: to thee is known the strife
 Which fierce 'twixt Atreus and Thyestes rose. 894

IPH. Yes, I have heard it; for the golden ram,—

ORES. In the rich texture didst thou not inweave it?

IPH. O thou most dear! Thou windest near my heart.

ORES. And image in the web the averted sun?

IPH. In the fine threads that figure did I work. 899

ORES. For Aulis did thy mother bathe thy limbs?

IPH. I know it, to unlucky spousals led.

ORES. Why to thy mother didst thou send thy locks?

IPH. Devoted for my body to the tomb.

ORES. What I myself have seen I now as proofs Will mention. In thy father's house, hung high 905 Within thy virgin chambers, the old spear Of Pelops, which he brandish'd when he slew Œnomaus, and won his beauteous bride, The virgin Hippodamia, Pisa's boast.

IPH. O thou most dear (for thou art he), most dear Acknowledged, thee, Orestes, do I hold, 911 From Argos, from thy country distant far?

ORES. And hold I thee, my sister, long deem'd dead?

Grief mix'd with joy, and tears, not taught by wo To rise, stand melting in thy eyes and mine. 915

IPH. Thee yet an infant in thy nurse's arms I left, a babe I left thee in the house.

Thou art more happy, O my soul, than speech Knows to express. What shall I say? 'tis all Surpassing wonder and the power of words. 920

ORES. May we together from this hour be bless'd!

IPH. An unexpected pleasure, O my friends, Have I received; yet fear I from my hands Lest to the air it fly. O sacred hearths Raised by the Cyclops! O my country, loved 925 Mycenæ! Now that thou didst give me birth, I thank thee; now I thank thee, that my youth Thou trainedst, since my brother thou has train'd, A beam of light, the glory of his house.

ORES. We in our race are happy; but our life, 930

My sister, by misfortunes is unhappy.

IPH. I was, I know, unhappy, when the sword
My father, frantic, pointed at my neck.

ORES. Ah me! methinks ev'n now I see thee
there.

IPH. When to Achilles, brother, not a bride, 935
I to the sacrifice by guile was led,
And tears and groans the altar compass'd round.

ORES. Alas, the lovers there!

IPH. I mourn'd the deed
My father dared; unlike a father's love;
Cruel, unlike a father's love, to me. 940

ORES. Ill deeds succeed to ill: if thou hadst slain
Thy brother, by some god impell'd, what griefs
Must have been thine at such a dreadful deed!

IPH. Dreadful, my brother, O how dreadful! Scarce
Hast thou escaped a foul, unhallow'd death, 945
Slain by my hands. But how will these things end?
What Fortune will assist me? What safe means
Shall I devise to send thee from this state,
From slaughter, to thy native land, to Argos,
Ere with thy blood the cruel sword be stain'd? 950
This to devise, O my unhappy soul!
This to devise is thine. Wilt thou by land,
Thy bark deserted, speed thy flight on foot?
Perils await thee mid these barbarous tribes, 954
Through pathless wilds; and 'twixt the clashing
rocks,

Narrow the passage for the flying bark,
And long. Unhappy, ah, unhappy me!
What god, what mortal, what unlook'd-for chance
Will expedite our dangerous way, and show
Two sprung from Atreus a release from ills? 960

CHO. What having seen and heard I shall relate,
Is marvellous, and passes fabling tales.

PYL. When after absence long, Orestes, friend
Meets friend, embraces will express their joy.
Behooves us now, bidding farewell to grief, 965
And heedful to obtain the glorious name

Of safety, from this barbarous land to fly.
The wise, of fortune not regardless, seize
The occasion, and to happiness advance.

ORES. Well hast thou said; and Fortune here, I
ween, 970

Will aid us; to the firm and strenuous mind
More potent works the influence divine.

IPH. Nothing shall check, nothing restrain my
speech:

First will I question thee what fortune waits
Electra: this to know would yield me joy. 975

ORES. With him [*pointing to Pylades*] she dwells,
and happy is her life.

IPH. Whence then is he? and from what father
sprung?

ORES. From Phocis: Strophius is his father
named.

IPH. By Atreus' daughter to my blood allied?

ORES. Nearly allied: my only faithful friend. 980

IPH. He was not then, me when my father slew.

ORES. Childless was Strophius for some length
of time.

IPH. O thou, the husband of my sister, hail!

ORES. More than relation, my preserver too. 984

IPH. But to thy mother why that dreadful deed?

ORES. Of that no more: to avenge my father's
death.

IPH. But for what cause did she her husband slay?

ORES. Of her inquire not: thou wouldst blush to
hear.

IPH. The eyes of Argos now are raised to thee.

ORES. There Menelaus is lord; I, outcast, fly. 990

IPH. Hath he then wrong'd his brother's ruin'd
house?

ORES. Not so: the Furies fright me from the
land.

IPH. The madness this, which seized thee on the
shore?

ORES. I was not first beheld unhappy there.

IPH. Stern powers! they haunt thee for thy
mother's blood. 995

ORES. And ruthless make me champ the bloody
bit.

IPH. Why to this region has thou steer'd thy
course?

ORES. Commanded by Apollo's voice, I come.

IPH. With what intent? if that may be disclosed.

ORES. I will inform thee, though to length of
speech 1000

This leads. When vengeance from my hands o'er-
took

My mother's deeds—foul deeds, which let me pass
In silence—by the Furies' fierce assaults

To flight I was impell'd: to Athens then
Apollo sent me, that, my cause there heard, 1005

I might appease the vengeful powers, whose names
May not be utter'd: the tribunal there

Is holy, which for Mars, when stain'd with blood,
Jove in old times establish'd. There arrived,

None willingly received me, by the gods 1010

As one abhorr'd; and they, who felt the touch
Of shame, the hospitable board alone

Yielded; and though one common roof beneath,
Their silence showing they disdain'd to hold

Converse with me, I took from them apart 1015

A lone repast; to each was placed a bowl
Of the same measure; this they filled with wine,

And bathed their spirits in delight. Unmeet
I deem'd it to express offence at those

Who entertain'd me, but in silence grieved, 1020

Showing a cheer as though I mark'd it not,
And sigh'd for that I shed my mother's blood.

A feast, I hear, at Athens is ordain'd

From this my evil plight, ev'n yet observed,
In which the equal-measured bowl then used 1025

Is by that people held in honour high.

But when to the tribunal on the mount
Of Mars I came, one stand I took, and one

The eldest of the Furies opposite :
 'The cause was heard touching my mother's blood,
 And Phœbus saved me by his evidence ; 1031
 Equal, by Pallas number'd, were the votes,
 And I from doom of blood victorious freed.
 Such of the Furies as there sat, appeased
 By the just sentence, nigh the court resolved 1035
 To fix their seat ; but others, whom the law
 Appeased not, with relentless tortures still
 Pursued me, till I reach'd the hallow'd soil
 Of Phœbus : stretch'd before his shrine, I swore
 Foodless to waste my wretched life away, 1040
 Unless the god, by whom I was undone,
 Would save me : from the golden tripod burst
 The voice divine, and sent me to this shore,
 Commanding me to bear the image hence,
 Which fell from Jove, and in the Athenian land 1045
 To fix it. What the oracular voice assign'd
 My safety, do thou aid : if we obtain
 The statue of the goddess, I no more
 With madness shall be tortured, but this arm
 Shall place thee in my bark, which ploughs the
 waves 1050
 With many an oar, and to Mycenæ safe
 Bear thee again. Show then a sister's love,
 O thou most dear ; preserve thy father's house,
 Preserve me too ; for me destruction waits,
 And all the race of Pelops, if we bear not 1055
 This heaven-descended image from the shrine.
 CHO. The anger of the gods hath raged severe,
 And plunged the race of Tantalus in woes.
 IPH. Ere thy arrival here, a fond desire
 To be again at Argos, and to see 1060
 Thee, my loved brother, fill'd my soul. Thy wish
 Is my warm wish, to free thee from thy toils,
 And from its ruins raise my father's house ;
 Nor harbour I 'gainst him, that slew me, thought
 Of harsh resentment: from thy blood my hands 1065
 Would I keep pure, thy house I would preserve.

But from the goddess how may this be hid ?
 The tyrant too I fear, when he shall find
 The statue on its marble base no more. 1069
 What then from death will save me ? What excuse
 Shall I devise ? Yet by one daring deed
 Might these things be achieved : couldst thou bear
 hence

The image, me too in thy gallant bark
 Placing secure, how glorious were the attempt !
 Me if thou join not with thee, I am lost 1075
 Indeed ; but thou, with prudent measures form'd,
 Return. I fly no danger, not ev'n death,
 Be death required, to save thee : no : the man
 Dying is mourn'd, as to his house a loss ;
 But woman's weakness is of light esteem. 1080

ORES. I would not be the murderer of my mother,
 And of thee too ; sufficient is her blood.
 No ; I will share thy fortune, live with thee,
 Or with thee die : to Argos I will lead thee,
 If here I perish not ; or dying, here 1085
 Remain with thee. But what my mind suggests,
 Hear : if Diana were averse to this,
 How could the voice of Phœbus from his shrine
 Declare that to the state of Pallas hence
 The statue of the goddess I should bear, 1090
 And see thy face ? All this, together weigh'd,
 Gives hope of fair success, and our return.

IPH. But how effect it, that we neither die,
 And what we wish achieve ? For our return 1094
 On this depends : this claims deliberate thought.

ORES. Have we not means to work the tyrant's
 death ?

IPH. For strangers full of peril were the attempt.

ORES. Thee would it save and me, it must be
 dared.

IPH. I could not : yet thy promptness I approve.

ORES. What if thou lodge me in the shrine con-
 ceal'd ? 1100

IPH. That in the shades of night we may escape ?

ORES. Night is a friend to frauds, the light to truth.

IPH. Within are sacred guards; we 'scape not them.

ORES. Ruin then waits us: how can we be saved?

IPH. I think I have some new and safe device. 1105

ORES. What is it? Let me know: impart thy thought.

IPH. Thy sufferings for my purpose I will use,—

ORES. To form devices quick is woman's wit.

IPH. And say, thy mother slain, thou fledd'st from Argos.

ORES. If to aught good, avail thee of my ills. 1110

IPH. Unmeet then at this shrine to offer thee.

ORES. What cause alleged? I reach not thine intent.

IPH. As now impure: when hallow'd, I will slay thee.

ORES. How is the image thus more promptly gain'd?

IPH. Thee I will hallow in the ocean waves. 1115

ORES. The statue we would gain is in the temple.

IPH. That, by thy touch polluted, I would cleanse.

ORES. Where? On the watery margin of the main?

IPH. Where thy tall bark secured with cables rides.

ORES. And who shall bear the image in his hands? 1120

IPH. Myself; profaned by any touch but mine.

ORES. What of this blood shall on my friend be charged?

IPH. His hands, it shall be said, like thine are stain'd.

ORES. In secret this, or to the king disclosed?

IPH. With his assent; I cannot hide it from him.

ORES. My bark with ready oars attends thee near. 1126

IPH. That all be well appointed, be thy charge.

ORES. One thing alone remains ; that these conceal
 Our purpose : but address them, teach thy tongue
 Persuasive words : a woman hath the power 1130
 To melt the heart to pity : thus perchance
 All things may to our warmest wish succeed.

IPH. Ye train of females, to my soul most dear,
 On you mine eyes are turn'd, on you depends
 My fate ; with prosperous fortune to be bless'd, 1135
 Or to be nothing, to my country lost,
 Of a dear kinsman and a much-loved brother
 Deprived. This plea I first would urge, that we
 Are women, and have hearts by nature form'd
 To love each other, of our mutual trusts 1140
 Most firm preservers. Touching our design,
 Be silent, and assist our flight : naught claims
 More honour than the faithful tongue. You see
 How the same fortune links us three, most dear
 Each to the other, to revisit safe 1145
 Our country, or to die. If I am saved,
 That thou mayst share my fortune, I to Greece
 Will bring thee safe : but thee by this right hand,
 Thee I conjure, and thee ; by this loved cheek
 Thee, by thy knees, by all that in your house 1150
 Is dearest to you, father, mother, child,
 If you have children. What do you reply ?
 Which of you speaks assent ? Or which dissents ?
 But be you all assenting : for my plea
 If you approve not, ruin falls on me, 1155
 And my unhappy brother too must die.

CHO. Be confident, loved lady, and consult
 Only thy safety : all thou givest in charge,
 Be witness, mighty Jove, I will conceal.

IPH. O, for this generous promise be you bless'd !
 To enter now the temple be thy part, 1161
 And thine : for soon the monarch of the land
 Will come, inquiring if the strangers yet
 Have bow'd their necks as victims at the shrine.

Goddess revered, who in the dreadful bay 1165
 Of Aulis from my father's slaughtering hand
 Didst save me; save me now, and these: through
 thee,
 Else will the voice of Phœbus be no more
 Held true by mortals. From this barbarous land
 To Athens go propitious: here to dwell 1170
 Beseems thee not; thine be a polish'd state!

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O bird, that round each craggy height
 Projecting o'er the sea below,
 Wheel'st thy melancholy flight,
 Thy song attuned to notes of wo; 1175
 The wise thy tender sorrows own,
 Which thy lost lord unceasing moan;
 Like thine, sad halcyon, be my strain,
 A bird, that have no wings to fly:
 With fond desire for Greece I sigh, 1180
 And for my much-loved social train;
 Sigh for Diana, pitying maid,
 Who joys to rove o'er Cynthus' heights,
 Or in the branching laurel's shade,
 Or in the soft-hair'd palm delights, 1185
 Or the hoar olive's sacred boughs,
 Lenient of sad Latona's woes;
 Or in the lake, that rolls its wave
 Where swans their plumage love to lave;
 Then, to the Muses soaring high, 1190
 The homage pay of melody.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Ye tears, what frequent-falling showers
 Roll'd down these cheeks in streams of wo,
 When in the dust my country's towers
 Lay levell'd by the conquering foe; 1195
 And, to their spears a prey, their oars
 Brought me to these barbaric shores!

For gold exchanged, a traffic base,
 No vulgar slave, the task is mine,
 Here at Diana's awful shrine, 1200
 Who loves the woodland hind to chase,
 The virgin priestess to attend,
 Daughter of rich Mycenæ's lord ;
 At other shrines her wish to bend,
 Where bleeds the victim less abhorr'd : 1205
 No respite to her griefs she knows ;
 Not so the heart inured to woes,
 As train'd to sorrow's rigid lore :
 Now comes a change ; it mourns no more :
 But to long bliss when ill succeeds, 1210
 The anguish'd heart for ever bleeds.

STROPHE II.

Thee, loved virgin, freed from fear
 Home the Argive bark shall bear :
 Mountain Pan, with thrilling strain,
 To the oars that dash the main 1215
 In just cadence well agreed,
 Shall accord his wax-join'd reed :
 Phœbus, with a prophet's fire
 Sweeping o'er his seven-string'd lyre,
 And his voice attuning high 1220
 To the swelling harmony,
 Thee shall guide the wild waves o'er
 To the soft Athenian shore.
 Leaving me, thy oars shall sweep
 Eager o'er the foaming deep : 1225
 Thou shalt catch the rising gales
 Swelling in thy firm-bound sails ;
 And thy bark in gallant pride
 Light shall o'er the billows glide.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Might I through the lucid air 1230
 Fly where rolls yon flaming car,
 O'er those loved and modest bowers,
 Where I pass'd my youthful hours,
 EURIP. VOL. III.—Y

I would stay my weary flight,
 Wave no more my pennons light, 1235
 But, amid the virgin band,
 Once my loved companions, stand :
 Once mid them my charms could move,
 Blooming then, the flames of love ;
 When the mazy dance I trod, 1240
 While with joy my mother glow'd ;
 When to vie in grace was mine,
 And in splendid robes to shine ;
 For, with radiant tints impress'd,
 Glow'd for me the gorgeous vest ; 1245
 And these tresses gave new grace,
 As their ringlets shade my face.

THOAS, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

THO. Where is the Grecian lady, to whose charge
 This temple is committed ? Have her rites
 Hallow'd the strangers ? Do their bodies burn 1250
 In the recesses of the sacred shrine ?

CHO. She comes, and will inform thee, king, of
 all.

THO. Daughter of Agamemnon, what means this ?
 The statue of the goddess in thine arms 1254
 Why dost thou bear, from its firm base removed ?

IPH. There in the portal, monarch, stay thy step.

THO. What of strange import in the shrine hath
 chanced ?

IPH. Things ominous : that word I, holy, speak.

THO. To what is tuned thy proem ? Plainly
 speak.

IPH. Not pure the victims, king, you lately seized.

THO. What show'd thee this ? Or speak'st thou
 but thy thought ? 1261

IPH. Back turn'd the sacred image on its base.

THO. Spontaneous turn'd, or by an earthquake
 moved ?

IPH. Spontaneous, and, averted, closed its eyes.

THO. What was the cause? The blood-stain'd
stranger's guilt? 1265

IPH. That, and naught else; for horrible their
deeds.

THO. What, have they slain some Scythian on
the shore?

IPH. They came polluted with domestic blood.

THO. What blood? I have a strong desire to
know.

IPH. They slew their mother with confederate
swords. 1270

THO. O Phœbus! This hath no barbarian dared.

IPH. All Greece indignant chased them from her
realms.

THO. Bear'st thou for this the image from the
shrine?

IPH. To the pure air, from stain of blood re-
moved.

THO. By what means didst thou know the stran-
ger's guilt? 1275

IPH. I learn'd it as the statue started back.

THO. Greece train'd thee wise: this well hast thou
discern'd.

IPH. Now with sweet blandishments they sooth
my soul.

THO. Some glozing tale from Argos telling thee?

IPH. I have one brother: he, they say, lives
happy,— 1280

THO. That thou mayst save them for their pleas-
ing news?

IPH. And that my father lives, by fortune bless'd.

THO. But on the goddess well thy thoughts are
turn'd.

IPH. I hate all Greece; for it hath ruin'd me.

THO. What with the strangers, say then, should
be done? 1285

IPH. The law ordain'd in reverence we must hold.

THO. Are then thy lovers ready, and the sword?

IPH. First I would cleanse them with ablutions
pure.

THO. In fountain waters, or the ocean wave ?

IPH. All man's pollutions doth the salt sea cleanse.

THO. More holy to the goddess will they bleed. 1291

IPH. And better what I have in charge advance.

THO. Doth not the wave ev'n 'gainst the temple
beat ?

IPH. This requires solitude : more must I do.

THO. Lead where thou wilt : on secret rite I pry
not. 1295

IPH. The image of the goddess I must cleanse.

THO. If it be stain'd with touch of mother's blood.

IPH. I could not else have borne it from its base.

THO. Just is thy provident and pious thought ;

For this by all the state thou art revered. 1300

IPH. Know'st thou what next I would ?

THO. 'Tis thine thy will

To signify.

IPH. Give for these strangers chains.

THO. To what place can they fly ?

IPH. A Grecian knows

Naught faithful.

THO. Of my train go some for chains.

IPH. Let them lead forth the strangers.

THO. Be it so. 1305

IPH. And veil their faces.

THO. From the sun's bright beams ?

IPH. Some of thy train send with me.

THO. These shall go,

Attending thee.

IPH. One to the city send.

THO. With what instructions charged ?

IPH. That all remain

Within their houses.

THO. That the stain of blood 1310

They meet not ?

IPH. These things have pollution in them.

THO. Go thou and bear the instructions

- IPH. That none come
In sight.
- THO. How wisely careful for the city!
- IPH. Warn our friends most.
- THO. This speaks thy care for me.
- IPH. Stay thou before the shrine.
- THO. To what intent? 1315
- IPH. Cleanse it with lustral fires.
- THO. That thy return
May find it pure?
- IPH. But when the strangers come
Forth from the temple,—
- THO. What must I then do?
- IPH. Spread o'er thine eyes a veil.
- THO. That I receive not
Pollution?
- IPH. Tedious if my stay appear,— 1320
- THO. What bounds may be assign'd?
- IPH. Deem it not strange.
- THO. At leisure what the rites require perform.
- IPH. May this lustration as I wish succeed!
- THO. Thy wish is mine.
- IPH. But from the temple, see,
The strangers come, the sacred ornaments, 1325
The hallow'd lambs—for I with blood must wash
This execrable blood away,—the light
Of torches, and what else my rites require
To purify these strangers to the goddess.
But to the natives of this land my voice 1330
Proclaims, from this pollution far remove,
Art thou attendant at the shrine, who liftest
Pure to the gods thy hands, or nuptial rites
Dost thou prepare, or pregnant matron; hence,
Begone, that this defilement none may touch. 1335
Thou, daughter of Latona and high Jove,
O royal virgin, if I cleanse the stain
Of these, and where I ought with holy rites
Address thee, thou shalt hold thy residence
In a pure mansion; we too shall be bless'd. 1340

More though I speak not, goddess, unexpress'd,
All things to thee and to the gods are known.

CHORUS.

Latona's glorious offspring claims the song,
Born the hallow'd shades among,
Where fruitful Delos winds her valleys low ; 1345
Bright-hair'd Phœbus, skill'd to inspire
Raptures, as he sweeps the lyre,
And she that glories in the unerring bow.
From the rocky ridges steep,
At whose feet the hush'd waves sleep, 1350
Left their far-famed native shore,
Them the exulting mother bore
To Parnassus, on whose heights
Bacchus shouting holds his rites ;
Glittering in the burnish'd shade, 1355
By the laurel's branches made,
Where the enormous dragon lies,
Brass his scales, and flame his eyes,
Earth-born monster, that around
Rolling guards the oracular ground ; 1360
Him, while yet a sportive child,
In his mother's arms that smiled,
Phœbus slew, and seized the shrine
Whence proceeds the voice divine :
On the golden tripod placed, 1365
Throne by falsehood ne'er disgraced,
Where Castalia's pure stream flows,
He the fates to mortal shows.
But when Themis, whom of yore
Earth, her fruitful mother, bore, 1370
From her hallow'd seat he drove,
Earth to avenge her daughter strove,
Forming visions of the night,
Which, in rapt dreams hovering light,
All that Time's dark volumes hold 1375

Might to mortal sense unfold,
 When in midnight's sable shades
 Sleep the silent couch invades :
 Thus did Earth her vengeance boast.
 His prophetic honours lost, 1380
 Royal Phœbus speeds his flight
 To Olympus, on whose height
 At the throne of Jove he stands,
 Stretching forth his little hands,
 Suppliant that the Pythian shrine 1385
 Feel no more the wrath divine ;
 That the goddess he appease ;
 That her nightly visions cease.
 Jove with smiles beheld his son
 Early thus address his throne, 1390
 Suing with ambitious pride
 O'er the rich shrine to preside ;
 He, assenting, bow'd his head.
 Straight the nightly visions fled ;
 And prophetic dreams no more 1395
 Hover'd slumbering mortals o'er :
 Now to Phœbus given again,
 All his honours pure remain ;
 Votaries distant regions send
 His frequented throne to attend : 1400
 And the firm decrees of fate
 On his faithful voice await.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Say you, that keep the temple, and attend
 The altar, where is Thoas, Scythia's king ?
 Open these strong-compacted gates, and call 1405
 Forth from the shrine the monarch of the land.

CHO. Wherefore ? at thy command if I must
 speak.

MES. The two young men are gone, through the
 device
 Of Agamemnon's daughter : from this land

They fly; and, in their Grecian galley placed, 1410
The sacred image of the goddess bear.

CHO. Incredible thy tale: but whom thou seek'st,
The monarch, from the temple went in haste.

MES. Whither? for what is doing he should know.

CHO. We know not: but go thou, and seek for
him: 1415

Where'er thou find him, thou wilt tell him this.

MES. See, what a faithless race you women are!
In all that hath been done you have a part.

CHO. Sure thou art mad! what with the strangers'
flight

Have we to do? But wilt thou not, with all 1420
The speed thou mayst, go to the monarch's house?

MES. Not till I first am well inform'd, if here
Within the temple be the king, or not.

Unbar the gates (to you within I speak);

And tell your lord that at the portal here 1425

I stand, and bring him tidings of fresh ills.

THOAS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

THO. Who at the temple of the goddess dares
This clamour raise, and, thundering at the gates,
Strikes terror through the ample space within?

MES. With falsehoods would these women drive
me hence, 1430

Without to seek thee: thou wast in the shrine.

THO. With what intent? or what advantage
sought?

MES. Of these hereafter; what more urgent now
Imports thee, hear: the virgin, in this place
Presiding at the altars, from this land 1435

Is with the strangers fled, and bears with her
The sacred image of the goddess; all
Of her ablutions but a false pretence.

THO. How say'st thou? What is her accursed
design? 1439

MES. To save Orestes: this too will amaze thee.

THO. Whom ? What Orestes ? Clytemnestra's son ?

MES. Him at the altar hallow'd now to bleed.

THO. Portentous ! for what less can it be call'd ?

MES. Think not on that, but hear me ; with deep thought 1444

Reflect : weigh well what thou shalt hear ; devise
By what pursuit to reach and seize the strangers.

THO. Speak : thou advisest well : the sea though nigh,

They fly not so as to escape my spear.

MES. When to the shore we came, where station'd rode

The galley of Orestes, by the rocks 1450

Conceal'd to us, whom thou hadst sent with her

To hold the strangers' chains, the royal maid

Made signs that we retire, and stand aloof,

As if with secret rites she would perform

The purposed expiation : on she went, 1455

In her own hands holding the strangers' chains

Behind them : not without suspicion this,

Yet by thy servants, king, allow'd. At length,

That we might deem her in some purpose high

Employ'd, she raised her voice, and chanted loud

Barbaric strains, as if with mystic rites 1461

She cleansed the stain of blood. When we had sat

A tedious while, it came into our thought,

That from their chains unloosed, the stranger youths

Might kill her, and escape by flight : yet fear 1465

Of seeing what we ought not, kept us still

In silence ; but at length we all resolved

To go, though not permitted, where they were.

There we behold the Grecian bark with oars 1469

Well furnish'd, wing'd for flight ; and at their seats,

Grasping their oars, were fifty rowers ; free

From chains beside the stern the two youths stood.

Some from the prow relieved the keel with poles ;

Some weigh'd the anchors up ; the climbing ropes

Some hasten'd, through their hands the cables
 drew, 1475
 Launch'd the light bark, and gave her to the main.
 But when we saw their treacherous wiles, we rush'd
 Heedless of danger, seized the priestess, seized
 'The halsers, hung upon the helm, and strove
 To rend the rudder-bands away. Debate 1480
 Now rose :—"What mean you, sailing o'er the seas,
 The statue and the priestess from the land
 By stealth conveying? Whence art thou, and who,
 That bear'st her, like a purchased slave, away?"
 He said, "I am her brother; be of this 1485
 Inform'd; Orestes, son of Agamemnon:
 My sister, so long lost, I bear away,
 Recover'd here." But naught the less for that
 Held we the priestess, and by force would lead
 Again to thee: hence dreadful on our cheeks 1490
 The blows; for in their hands no sword they held,
 Nor we; but many a rattling stroke the youths
 Dealt with their fists, against our sides and breasts
 Their arms fierce darting, till our batter'd limbs
 Were all disabled: now with dreadful marks 1495
 Disfigured, up the precipice we fly,
 Some bearing on their heads, some in their eyes
 The bloody bruises: standing on the heights,
 Our fight was safer, and we hurl'd at them
 Fragments of rocks; but, standing on the stern, 1500
 The archers with their arrows drove us thence;
 And now a swelling wave roll'd in, which drove
 The galley towards the land. The sailors fear'd
 The sudden swell: on his left arm sustain'd,
 Orestes bore his sister through the tide, 1505
 Mounted the bark's tall side, and on the deck
 Safe placed her, and Diana's holy image,
 Which fell from heaven; from the midship his voice
 He sent aloud:—"Ye youths, that in this bark 1509
 From Argos plough'd the deep, now ply your oars,
 And dash the billows till they foam: those things
 Are ours, for which we swept the Euxine sea.

And steer'd our course within its clashing rocks."
 They gave a cheerful shout, and with their oars
 Dash'd the salt wave. The galley, while it rode 1515
 Within the harbour, work'd its easy way ;
 But having pass'd its mouth, the swelling flood
 Roll'd on it, and with sudden force the wind
 Impetuous rising drove it back: their oars
 They slack'd not, stoutly struggling 'gainst the
 wave ; 1520

But towards the land the refluent flood impell'd
 The galley: then the royal virgin stood,
 And pray'd:—" O daughter of Latona, save me,
 Thy priestess save; from this barbaric land
 To Greece restore me, and forgive my thefts: 1525
 For thou, O goddess, dost thy brother love,
 Deem then that I love those allied to me."

The mariners responsive to her prayer
 Shouted loud pæans, and their naked arms,
 Each cheering each, to their stout oars apply. 1530
 But nearer and yet nearer to the rock
 The galley drove: some rush'd into the sea,
 Some strain'd the ropes that bind the loosen'd sails.
 Straight was I hither sent to thee, O king,
 To inform thee of these accidents. But haste, 1535
 Take chains and gyves with thee; for if the flood
 Subside not to a calm, there is no hope
 Of safety to the strangers. Be assured,
 That Neptune, awful monarch of the main,
 Remembers Troy; and, hostile to the race 1540
 Of Pelops, will deliver to thy hands,
 And to thy people, as is meet, the son
 Of Agamemnon; and bring back to thee
 His sister, who the goddess hath betray'd,
 Unmindful of the blood at Aulis shed. 1545

Сно. Unhappy Iphigenia, thou must die,
 Thy brother too must die, if thou again,
 Seized in thy flight, to thy lord's hands shalt come.

Тно. Inhabitants of this barbaric land,
 Will you not rein your steeds, will you not fly 1550

Along the shore, to seize whate'er this skiff
Of Greece casts forth ; and, for your goddess roused,
Hunt down these impious men ? Will you not
launch

Instant your swift-oar'd barks, by sea, by land
To catch them, from the rugged rock to hurl 1555

Their bodies, or impale them on the stake ?

But for you, women, in these dark designs

Accomplices, hereafter, as I find

Convenient leisure, I will punish you.

The occasion urges now, and gives no pause. 1560

MINERVA, THOAS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MIN. Whither, O royal Thoas, dost thou lead
This vengeful chase ? Attend : Minerva speaks.

Cease thy pursuit, and stop this rushing flood

Of arms ; for hither, by the fateful voice

Of Phœbus, came Orestes, warn'd to fly 1565

The anger of the Furies, to convey

His sister to her native Argos back,

And to my land the sacred image bear.

Thoas, I speak to thee : him, whom thy rage

Would kill, Orestes, on the wild waves seized, 1570

Neptune, to do me grace, already wafts

On the smooth sea, the swelling surges calm'd.

And thou, Orestes (for my voice thou hear'st,

Though distant far), to my commands attend :

Go, with the sacred image, which thou bear'st, 1575

And with thy sister : but when thou shalt come

To Athens built by gods, there is a place

On the extreme borders of the Attic land,

Close neighbouring to Carystia's craggy height,

Sacred ; my people call it Alæ : there 1580

A temple raise, and fix the statue there,

Which from the Tauric goddess shall receive

Its name, and from thy toils, which thou, through

Greece

Driven by the Furies' maddening stings, hast borne ;

And mortals shall in future times with hymns 1585

The Tauric goddess there, Diana, hail.
 And be this law establish'd; when the feast
 For thy deliverance from this shrine is held,
 To a man's throat that they apply the sword,
 And draw the blood, in memory of these rites, 1590
 That of her honours naught the goddess lose.
 Thou, Iphigenia, on the hallow'd heights
 Of Brauron on this goddess shalt attend.
 Her priestess, dying shalt be there interr'd,
 Graced with the honours of the gorgeous vests 1595
 Of finest texture, in their houses left
 By matrons who in childbed pangs expired.
 These Grecian dames back to their country lead,
 I charge thee; justice this return demands,
 For I saved thee, when on the mount of Mars 1600
 The votes were equal; and from that decree
 The shells in number equal still absolve.
 But, son of Agamemnon, from this land
 Thy sister bear; nor, Thoas, be thou angry.

THO. Royal Minerva, he that hears the gods 1605
 Commanding, and obeys not, is unwise.
 My anger 'gainst Orestes flames no more,
 Gone though he be, and bears with him away
 The statue of the goddess, and his sister.
 Have mortals glory 'gainst the powerful gods 1610
 Contending? Let them go, and to thy land
 The sacred image bear, and fix it there;
 Good fortune go with them. To favour Greece,
 These dames, at thy high bidding, I will send.
 My arms will I restrain, which I had raised 1615
 Against the strangers, and my swift-oar'd barks,
 Since, potent goddess, this is pleasing to thee.

MIN. I praise thy resolution; for the power
 Of Fate o'er thee and o'er the gods prevails.
 Breathe soft, ye favouring gales, to Athens bear 1620
 These sprung from Agamemnon; on their course
 Attending, I will go, and heedful save
 My sister's sacred image. You too go [*to the Chorus*
 Prosperous, and in the fate that guards you bless'd.

CHO. O thou, among the immortal gods revered
And mortal men, Minerva, we will do 1626
As thou commandest; for with transport high,
Exceeding hope, our ears receive thy words.
O Victory, I revere thy awful power: 1629
Guard thou my life, nor ever cease to crown me!

1629 The Phœnissæ and Orestes also conclude with these lines: they are the supplication of the poet for the favourable reception of his tragedy, and allude to the crown with which the successful drama was honoured.

A N D R O M A C H E .

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ANDROMACHE.

HERMIONE.

MENELAUS

MOLOSSUS.

PELEUS.

ORESTES.

THETIS.

FEMALE ATTENDANTS.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS of Phthian virgins.

ANDROMACHE.

ARGUMENT.

AFTER the destruction of Troy, Andromache, the wife of Hector, in the division of prisoners by the Greeks, falls to the lot of Pyrrhus, to whom she bears a son, named Molossus. The unfortunate captive and her infant excite the jealousy of Hermione, the barren wife of her conqueror. She, in conjunction with her father Menelaus, resolves to take advantage of the absence of Pyrrhus at Delphi, to destroy both the mother and child: this cruel design, however, is prevented by the interference of Peleus. Hermione, finding her schemes defeated, determines to lay violent hands on herself, to avoid her husband's resentment. This resolution is soon changed by the arrival of Orestes, with whom she consents to elope; while Pyrrhus is soon after murdered by the Delphians, at the instigation of Orestes. The grief of Peleus at the premature death of his grandson is allayed by the appearance of Thetis, who commands him to bestow Andromache in marriage on Helenus, the son of Priam: the crown of Epirus is to be conferred on her son Molossus, from whom a long successive race of kings is promised to descend.—[The scene is before the temple of Thetis, adjoining to the palace of Pyrrhus, near Phthia.]

ANDROMACHE.

THOU grace of Asia's empire, tower'd Thebe,
From whence, with all the gorgeous pomp of gold
Endow'd, to Priam's royal house I came,
In marriage given to Hector; in those days
Andromache was bless'd, supremely bless'd;
But now, of all my sex that e'er have lived,
Or e'er shall live, I am the greatest wretch;
For by Achilles I have seen my lord,

5

My Hector, slaughter'd ; and my son, the pledge
 Of our connubial love, Astyanax, 10
 Hurl'd headlong from the rampires' tower'd height,
 After the Grecian arms had vanquish'd Troy.
 But I, who in a palace had been nursed
 Ev'n in the lap of liberty, was brought
 To Greece a slave, to Neoptolemus, 15
 An island lord, assign'd the prize of war,
 Selected from the spoils of plunder'd Troy.
 In Phthia and Pharsalia, neighbouring towns,
 I have my habitation, in whose plains
 The sea-born Thetis once with Peleus dwelt 20
 Apart, retiring from the haunts of men ;
 In honour of the goddess holding here
 Her nuptials, Thetidæum is the place
 By the Thessalians named ; and here the chief,
 Son of Achilles, in this house hath fix'd 25
 His residence, and o'er Thessalia's realms
 Lets Peleus reign, unwilling to receive
 The sceptre while the hoary king yet lives.
 Forced to the embraces of my lord, a son
 I in this house have borne ; and till this hour, 30
 Sunk as I was by my afflictions, hope
 Still flatter'd me, that, were my son preserved,
 Some comfort, some protection I might find
 Amid my ills : but since this Spartan bride,
 Hermione, he weds, from me his slave 35
 My lord has been estranged, and I by her
 Am with most cruel injuries oppress'd ;
 Accused, that by my secret-working spells,
 I make her childless, and her husband's love
 Charm from her, wishing in this house myself, 40
 Holding her place, to dwell, her bed by force
 Cast out. But I have lost what I at first
 Unwillingly received. Almighty Jove,
 Be witness, that unwillingly I shared
 His bed ! But all I urge is lost on her, 45
 And she resolves to kill me : with her joins
 Her father Menelaus, and to this house

From Sparta for this purpose now is come.
 But I dismay'd have left the adjoining house,
 And suppliant at the shrine of Thetis sit, 50
 If she from death will save me : for this place
 Peleus, and all that sprung from Peleus, hold
 In reverence, of the goddess and her nuptials
 Hallow'd memorial. But mine only son
 I to another house have sent by stealth, 55
 Fearing his death ; for he, who gave him birth,
 Is not at hand to succour me ; his son
 In him finds no protection, in the land
 Of Delphi distant far, to Phœbus where
 He makes atonement for the ungovern'd rage 60
 Which urged him once at Pytho on the god
 To call for vengeance for his father's death ;
 If haply Phœbus for his past offence
 He may propitiate, by his vows appeased. 64

ANDROMACHE, FEMALE ATTENDANT.

ATT. My royal mistress, for that name my tongue
 Shall not refuse, accustom'd in thy house,
 When we in Troy together dwelt, to pay
 That honour ; and a zeal, which sprung from love
 For thee and for thy husband, when he lived,
 Prompted my duty ; now too am I come 70
 To tell thee what I know, with fear indeed,
 Lest by our lords not unperceived, yet moved
 With pity towards thee. Dreadful the designs
 By Menelaus and by his daughter form'd
 Against thee : reason is, thou guard thee well. 75

AND. My dearest fellow-slave (for thou art now
 A fellow-slave with me who was thy queen
 Once, but am now a wretch), what their design ?
 What treacherous business plan they now, intent
 To take away my miserable life ? 80

ATT. Thy son, whom from the house thou hast
 removed
 By stealth, unhappy lady, they will slay.

AND. Is it then known (ah me !) where I my son

Endeavour'd to conceal? How was it known?

Ah cruel fortune, how am I undone! 85

ATT. I know not: but of them these things I
learn'd;

And Menelaus is gone to seize thy son.

AND. Then I am lost indeed. Thee, O my child,
Will these two vultures seize and kill; while he,
Who gave thee birth, at Delphi lingers yet. 90

ATT. I think thou wouldst not suffer ills like these,
Were he but present: thou art friendless now.

AND. Of Peleus, and his coming, is naught heard?

ATT. Little, if present, would his age avail thee.

AND. Yet have I sent to him not once alone. 95

ATT. Is it that none, whom thou hast sent, re-
gards thee?

AND. Whence should they? Wilt thou then my
message bear?

ATT. What for so long an absence shall I plead?

AND. Thou art a woman, and wilt find excuse.

ATT. 'Tis dangerous: watchful is Hermione. 100

AND. See, in their ills thou canst forsake thy
friends.

ATT. Not so; with that reproach me not: I go:
For whate'er vengeance falls on me, my life
(A woman and a slave) is little worth.

AND. Go then, this instant go: and I will vent
To yon ethereal skies my griefs, my plaints, 106

My tears; for women are by nature form'd
To feel some consolation, when their tongue
Gives utterance to the afflictions they endure.

Mine is no single grief; my sorrows flow 110

From various sources: my paternal realm,
My slaughter'd Hector, and my ruthless fate,
Which bows me to the yoke of servitude,

Unworthy fall, I mourn. No mortal man
May therefore be call'd happy, till you see 115

The last of all his days, and how, that pass'd,
He to the realms of Pluto shall descend.

A pest, and not a bride, to Ilium's towers
 The mischief-working Helen Paris bore ;
 For her, in arms combined, the Grecian powers 120
 Sought with a thousand ships the Phrygian shore.

On thee, O Troy, with fire, with slaughter falls,
 And on my Hector, swift the vengeful war :
 Him the proud son of Thetis round the walls
 Dragg'd in the dust, as roll'd his rapid car. 125

Beneath the hateful yoke of slavery bow'd,
 They led me from my chamber to the strand :
 Tears, as I left the city, copious flow'd,
 Left my loved husband on the bloody sand.

Can I yet wish to view yon radiant sky, 130
 A slave, Hermione's harsh pride that bears ?
 From which a suppliant to this shrine I fly,
 And, like a dropping rock, dissolve in tears.

ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O thou, who on the ground, before the shrine
 Of Thetis, power divine, 135
 Long seated, wilt not quit the hallow'd place ;
 From Asia though thy race,
 And Phthia claims by birth, to thee
 I come, if aught my melting heart can find
 To ease the anguish of thy tortured mind ; 140
 Since rage inflames Hermione,
 In vengeance bursting on thy head,
 The hated rival of her bed.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thy fortune know : reflect what ills await
 Thy present hapless state : 145
 A Trojan dame, with those how hard to strive,
 From Sparta who derive
 Their race, thy lords ! no more contend.

Avails it, at their rigour though dismay'd,
 That soil'd in dust thy wasted form is laid ! 150
 With these, who here resistless reign,
 Weak as thou art, why strive in vain ?

STROPHE II.

Depart then ; quit the Nereid's splendid seat ;
 And know, that in a foreign state
 Thou art a slave to foes ; 155
 'Mong whom, of all thy former train,
 Thou canst not see a friend remain,
 O nymph oppress'd with woes !

ANTISTROPHE II.

Yet pity, dame of Ilium, knows her part,
 And melts for thee my tender heart ; 160
 But silent drops the tear,
 Lest that my bosom feels thy wo
 This Jove-descended queen should know :
 Our lords' stern power I fear.

HERMIONE, ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

HER. With these resplendent ornaments of gold
 Decking my tresses, in this robe array'd, 166
 Which bright with various-tinctured radiance flames,
 Not from the house of Peleus or Achilles
 A bridal gift, I come : in Sparta this
 From Menelaus, my father, I received, 170
 With a rich dowry : therefore I may speak
 Freely, and thus to you address my words.
 Woman, wouldst thou, a slave, beneath the spear
 A captive, keep possession of this house,
 And drive me out ? I, through thy baleful spells, 175
 Am hated by my husband, for my bed
 Is childless : dreadful potency the dames
 Of Asia boast in charms like these : but thee
 I will from such restrain ; for naught this house
 Of sea-born Thetis shall avail thee, naught 180
 Her altar, or her shrine : for thou shalt die.
 But should some god or mortal save thy life,
 Thou shalt be humbled for thy former pride,

And made to tremble, crouching at my knee,
 To sweep my house, to sprinkle crystal dews 185
 From golden vases, and to know where now
 Thou art : nor Hector here, nor Priam reigns,
 Nor is this Chryse, but a Grecian town.
 Thou wretch, so void of feeling is thy mind,
 That thou hast dared to share the bed of him 190
 Whose father slew thy husband, and to bear
 Children to him that from his murderer sprung.
 But such are all the rude barbarian race ;
 Father with daughter, son with mother weds,
 Brother with sister ; and the dearest friends 195
 Rush on through mutual slaughter ; no restraint
 Of law they know : these customs teach not here :
 For that one man should of two wives be lord,
 Honour allows not : but one nuptial bed
 Enjoying, let them fondly cherish that, 200
 Whoe'er without disquiet wish to dwell.

CHO. Our sex, to jealousy by nature prone,
 Brooks not a rival in the nuptial bed.

AND. Ah ! what an ill to mortal man is youth,
 And most to him whose youth no justice knows ! 205
 But much I fear lest that to be thy slave
 Excludes me from the liberty of speech,
 Though I have much to say which Justice prompts :
 Nay, should my plea be deem'd of weight, I fear
 Its force will hence be lost ; that they, whose pride
 Aspires beyond control, ill brook the speech 211
 Of those beneath them, though with reason urged :
 Yet will I not be wanting to myself.
 Say then, young princess, what convincing proof
 Persuades thee that from thy connubial bed 215
 I drive thee : is the Spartan state of power
 Less than the Phrygian ? Me dost thou behold
 By fortune raised to eminence, or free ?
 Or am I with the opening bloom of youth,

188 Chryse, a town of Cilicia, under the dominion of Eetion,
 the father of Andromache, whose royal seat was at Thebe.

Or with my country's greatness, or with friends 220
 Elate, that I should have a wish to keep
 Possession of thy house? For what? That I
 Should be a mother in thy place, and bear
 Sons to be slaves, a miserable train.
 My wretchedness attending? Who my sons, 225
 Shouldst thou be childless, would permit to reign
 At Phthia? Me, belike, the Grecians love
 For Hector's sake, and that I lived obscure
 Among the Phrygians, not in royal state.
 My spells effect not that thy husband hates thee, 230
 But thine own manners, unaccording found
 With Love's sweet converse: this the magic charm.
 It is not beauty, lady, that delights
 The husband's mind, but virtue's winning force.
 Thee if aught piques, the Spartan state is high 235
 Extoll'd, and Scyros held by thee in scorn,
 Thou art, 'mong those that know not riches, rich,
 And Menelaus, thy father, is high rank'd
 Above Achilles; for this waywardness
 Thy husband hates thee. It becomes the wife, 240
 Though to a bad man given, to hold him dear,
 Nor raise debates through peevishness of pride.
 Hadst thou in Thrace, wet with perpetual snow,
 Some tyrant for thy husband, where one man
 With many wives shares his connubial bed, 245
 Say, wouldst thou kill them? So thou wouldst be
 found
 Unsated appetite in all thy sex
 Encouraging: how shameful this! We feel
 This passion not less strong, perhaps, than men,
 But check it with the curb of modesty. 250
 O my loved Hector, I for thy dear sake
 Let my affection go with thine, if e'er
 Venus deceived thee; and to sons so born
 Oft gave this breast, that naught unkind from me

236 Scyros, an island in the Ægean sea, was the birth-place of Neoptolemus.

Might wound thy peace : and thus my husband's
love 255

I by my gentle virtue won. But thou
Wilt not allow, through jealous fear, one drop
Of Love's ethereal dew to light upon
Thy husband. Seek not, lady, to surpass
In love of man thy mother. It behooves 260
Children, if wise, such manners to avoid,
As their bad mothers mark'd with infamy.

CHO. Let me persuade thee, lady, with what ease
Thou mayst, to end this strife of words with her.

HER. What means thy arrogant, contentious
speech, 265
Vaunting thy chastity, and censuring mine ?

AND. The subject of thy speech proves thee un-
chaste.

HER. Ne'er in my heart be harbour'd thoughts like
thine.

AND. Thou art young yet : indecent is thy speech.

HER. Thou not by words, but actions, dost me
wrong. 270

AND. In silence for thy bed wilt thou not grieve ?

HER. Doth aught more nearly touch a woman's
mind ?

AND. And well, that mind when modest reason
rules.

HER. Our state we rule not by barbaric laws.

AND. Ev'n there such laws are base, and shameful
here. 275

HER. O thou art wise, art wise : yet thou shalt
die.

AND. The statue, see, of Thetis looks on thee ;—

HER. And hates thy country for Achilles' death.

AND. Helen, thy mother, caused his death, not I.

HER. Wilt thou through all their course trace back
my ills ? 280

AND. See, I am silent, nor unlock my lips.

HER. Speak that, for which I to this temple came.

EURIP. VOL. III.—A a

AND. I say thou hast not prudence as beseem thee.

HER. Wilt thou the Nereid's hallow'd temple leave ?

AND. May I not die : else never will I leave it. 285

HER. Resolved, I wait not till my husband comes.

AND. Nor, till he comes, yield I myself to thee.

HER. I will bring fire : I reckon not of the place.

AND. Then burn me ; but these things the gods will see. 289

HER. Thy body shall be gash'd with painful wounds.

AND. Kill me, pollute the altar with my blood ; The goddess will avenge the impious deed.

HER. Thou savage ! thou barbarian ! of a soul Harden'd to boldness, dost thou thus brave death ? But I will quickly rouse thee from this seat, 295 Thy will assenting ;—such a charm I have, I say not what : the effect will show it soon. Sit firm : for wert thou fix'd in melted lead, I will remove thee, ere the Phthian chief, In whom thy confidence is placed, returns. 300

ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

AND. In him my confidence indeed is placed. Strange, that to mortals, 'gainst the venom'd bite Of direful serpents, healing medicines The gods have given ; yet none have found a cure 'Gainst a bad woman, than the viper far 305 More noxious, or the violence of fire ; So pestilent an ill are we to men.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

What miseries from that fatal day
Arose, when to the Idæan grove
The son of Maia and of Jove, 310

298 Alluding to the method of fixing statues on their pedestals.

Their cars attending on the way,
Guided the rivals of the skies !

The cars roll'd on their splendid state ;
But with them Discord, gendering hate,
And contest fierce for beauty's prize : 315
Onward they roll'd in evil hour,
And reach'd the shepherd's lonely bower,
Where, mid his flocks that grazed around,
The solitary youth they found.

ANTISTROPHE, I.

Soon as they reach'd the shady grove, 320
Undress'd, their shining limbs they lave
Amid the cool translucent wave,
Which tumbles from the heights above ;
Then to the son of Priam came ;

And each, to gain the envied prize, 325
Her power displaying, proudly vies
With offer'd gifts his soul to inflame.
But Venus, versed in winning wiles,
With words that please the youth beguiles ;
But fraught with mischief, war, and fate, 330
Destructive to the Trojan state.

STROPHE II.

O, had his mother, on the fatal day
When Paris first she gave to light,
Cast the pernicious ill away,

Ere he had fix'd his bower on Ida's height ; 335
When from the laurel's hallow'd shade
Aloud Cassandra cried,—“ Destroy

This fatal pest of Priam and of Troy !”
Was there of those, whose hoary age
Render'd their reverend counsels sage, 340

To whom with ardour the prophetic maid
Did not her warning prayers apply,—
“ Let this ill-omen'd infant die !”

ANTISTROPHE II.

The Trojan dames then Slavery had not bound,
Condemn'd to drag her galling chain ; 345
Nor thou on Phthia's hostile ground

By thy proud lords been taught to taste of pain :
 Then had she freed the Grecian powers
 From all the painful toils of war,
 Which, fired with vengeance, from their country
 far, 350
 Our youth, inured to hardships, bore
 In arms on Troy's ensanguined shore,
 And fought ten tedious years around her towers :
 No tear had dew'd the widow'd bed :
 No father mourn'd his children dead. 355

MENELAUS, MOLOSSUS, ANDROMACHE, CHORUS.

MEN. Thy son, placed by thee in another house
 By stealth, to escape my daughter's eye, removed,
 I bring. Thy boast was that this hallow'd shrine,
 This image of the goddess, would to thee
 Give safety, and concealment to thy son. 360
 But, woman, it is found thy close-laid plans
 O'erreach not me ; and if this sacred ground
 Thou dost not leave, on him the death shall fall,
 Thy due : weigh this maturely : wilt thou die,
 Or shall he perish, for the heinous deeds, 365
 With which my daughter thou hast wrong'd, and
 me ?

AND. Opinion, O opinion ! many men
 Of slightest worth hast thou uplifted high
 In life's proud ranks. That glory, which by truth
 Is ratified, I reverence ; that, which springs 370
 From erring falsehood, gives no solid grace,
 The wantonness of fortune all its boast.
 Didst thou, once marching with the chiefs of Greece,
 Take Troy from Priam, abject as thou art,
 Who, at thy daughter's bidding, art thus fierce 375
 Against a child, and vauntest in mean strife
 With an unhappy woman, a poor slave ?
 Unworthy thee to vanquish Troy I deem,
 And Troy unworthy by thy hand to fall.
 Those, who of worth the semblance only wear, 380

Have splendid outsides, but within are found
 Like other men, save what of eminence
 They gain from wealth, for that hath mighty power.
 But let us make this wordy contest short:
 Should I beneath thy daughter die, should she 385
 Destroy me, never the polluting stain
 Of blood would she escape ; and the same guilt
 Of murder by the many will on thee
 Be charged ; for, sharing in the deed, of guilt
 Thou must have share. But if myself I save, 390
 So that I die not, will you slay my son ?
 And will his father tamely brook his death ?
 Not thus unmanly is he term'd at Troy.
 Occasion hence hath call'd him ; yet his deeds
 Worthy of Peleus, worthy of his sire 395
 Achilles will be found ; and he will drive
 Thy daughter from his house. Her shouldst thou
 give

Again in nuptial rites, what wilt thou say ?
 That she, of mild and modest manners, flies
 From a bad husband ? This would not be true. 400
 But who will wed her ? Wilt thou in thy house
 Keep her unwedded till her widow'd locks
 Are hoary ? Wretched man, dost thou not see
 In what a torrent ills upon thee rush ?
 How many women wouldst thou wish should wrong
 Thy daughter's bed, ere thou endure the ills 406
 I speak of ? Ill the chastening hand pursues
 Small things with heavy vengeance ; nor ought men,
 If women are pernicious pests, to form
 Their nature in resemblance of our sex. 410
 Whether thy daughter I with baneful drugs,
 Working abortion, as she says, have hurt,
 Free, unconstrain'd, not seeking at this shrine
 Protection, to be tried by him I yield
 My judge, to whom in marriage thou hast join'd
 her ; 415
 Nor for the wrong to him, for that his bed
 I render'd childless, is less vengeance due

From him. Such is my nature : but from thine
 I have one fear ; thou in a woman's cause
 Hast ruin'd the unhappy towers of Troy. 420

CHO. Thou with more boldness, than a woman
 ought

To men, hast spoken : thy indignant soul
 Bears thee beyond the bounds of modesty.

MEN. Woman, these things are small, and, as thou
 sayst,

Beneath my royal dignity, beneath 425

The dignity of Greece : but know thou this ;

What our necessities demand becomes

Of greater moment than to conquer Troy.

And to my daughter (for of moment this
 I deem), that of her bed she be not reft, 430

My aid is due : all else, as lighter griefs,

Well may a woman bear ; but what effects

The honour of her bed, affects her life.

He may command my slaves ; and the same right
 I and my daughter have o'er his ; for friends, 435

We know what friendship is, no private claim

Indulge, but each with each in common share

What they possess. Should I neglect to arrange,

Well as I may, my business, his return

Awaiting, I should be remiss, not wise. 440

But rise, this temple of the goddess quit,

For, if thou die, thy son escapes his fate ;

If thou refuse to die, him will I slay :

This is inevitable, one shall die.

AND. Dreadful alternative ! A cruel choice 445

Hast thou allow'd ; unhappy, if I choose ;

Not choosing, wretched : dreadful this ! O thou,

In mighty vengeance for slight cause severe,

Hear me : Why dost thou kill me ? for what crime ?

What town have I betray'd ? what child of thine 450

Have I made bleed ? what house have I with flames

Destroy'd ? A captive, to his bed my lord

Led me by force : yet him thou wilt not slay

Who wrought the offence, but me ; and from the
 cause
 Unjustly turn thy fury on the event. 455
 Wretch that I am, what miseries weigh me down ?
 O my unhappy country ! What dire ills
 I suffer ! What behooved it me again
 To be a mother, but with double grief
 To load this grief ? What joy hath life for me ? 460
 On which should I reflect, my present state,
 Or my past fortunes ? Hector I have seen
 Slaughter'd, and dragg'd bound to the rolling car,
 And Ilium blazing (piteous sight !) in flames.
 I to the Grecian fleet was borne a slave, 465
 Dragg'd by the hair ; and, when I reach'd the shore
 Of Phthia, was compell'd to wed his son
 Who slew my Hector. But my former woes
 Why wail, nor rather turn my mournful thoughts,
 And scan my present ills ? I had one son 470
 Yet left, a beam of light to cheer my life ;
 Him they will kill who joy in things like these.
 But for the sake of my unhappy life
 He shall not die ; for there is hope in him,
 If he shall be preserved ; and not to give 475
 My life to save my son's, in me were base.
 Behold, I quit the altar, to your hands
 (To murder, stab, bind, strangle me) resign'd.
 Thy mother, O my son, that she may save
 Thy life, descends to Pluto's dreary realms. 480
 If thou escape from death, remember me,
 Thy mother ; what I suffer'd, how I died,
 Remember : to thy father when thou goest,
 Mid thy caresses let thy warm tears flow,
 Hang on his knees, and tell him all my wrongs :
 For children are to all men life itself. 486
 If he, who knows not what a parent feels,
 Denies this, he hath less of anxious care,
 But mid his bliss the soul's best pleasures wants.
 Cho. She moves my pity ; for misfortunes raise
 A sympathetic grief in every breast, 491

Though the poor sufferer be of foreign race.
Well were it, king, wouldst thou in concord join
Her and thy daughter, that her griefs may cease.

MEN. Seize her, slaves; bind her hands; for she
shall hear 495
Words of no pleasing sound. That thou mightst
quit

This hallow'd altar to the goddess raised,
I made pretence to slay thy son, and thus
Wrought thee to come into my hands, to death
Devoted; for most surely thou shalt die. 500
But of thy son my daughter shall decide,
To slay, or not to slay him, as her will
Inclines her. But go thou into this house,
That thou mayst learn with thy opprobrious taunts,
Slave as thou art, no more to insult the free. 505

AND. Ah! by thy guile, thy fraud, am I deceived.

MEN. To all proclaim it: I deny it not.

AND. And is this wisdom on Eurotas' banks?

MEN. Ay, and at Troy, ill actions to requite.

AND. Hath heaven no gods, or none that will
avenge? 510

MEN. When that comes, we shall bear it: thou
shalt die.

AND. And my poor child, torn from my sheltering
wing?

MEN. No: of his life my daughter shall dispose.

AND. Alas, my son, how shall I mourn thy fate?

MEN. What! will thy hope in him no longer live?

AND. O, ye vile Spartans! most of all mankind 516

By all the world detested, train'd in wiles,
Supreme in falsehoods, artful to devise
Whate'er of mischief, dark in your designs
And intricate, unsafe, your thoughts involved 520
Maze within maze, unjustly hath your state
This eminence in Greece! What is not yours
Of ill effective? Are you not distain'd
With frequent murders, and intent on base
And shameful gains? Are you not always found

To speak one thing, while other purposes 526
 Are in your hearts conceal'd? Perdition on you!
 But death is not so terrible to me
 As thou mayst think it: me disastrous Fate
 Then sunk, when Phrygia's hapless city fell, 530
 And my illustrious husband, whose strong spear
 Oft made thee quit the embattled field, and seek
 Sad shelter in thy ships; but standing now
 A dreadful warrior 'gainst a woman, me
 Thou killest: kill me; never shall my tongue 535
 Deign with soft speech to sue to thee for grace,
 Nor to thy daughter: great though thou art now
 At Sparta, I was once as great at Troy:
 If Fortune now hath bowed me to the dust, 539
 Vaunt not; her power may bow thee down as low.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Ne'er the divided bed of love
 Shall my assenting voice approve.
 Wo to the house, O man, that knows
 Sons who from different mothers rose:
 The sweet domestic joys of life 545
 Are chased away by tumult, rage, and strife.
 One bride then be content to wed,
 Nor let a rival share her bed.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Nor are states form'd in peace to obey
 Two sceptres, and a double sway: 550
 Burden on burden then is borne,
 And the vex'd realm with faction torn.
 Nay, 'twixt two bards, whose raptur'd song
 Rolls the full tide of harmony along,
 Discord the Muses love to raise, 555
 Each envious of the other's praise.

STROPHE II.

High when the seas with boisterous winds arise,
 Less safe the labouring vessel braves
 The fury of the swelling waves,

Where many strive to steer her course, though wise
 Than if one pilot's care presides, 561
 Though with less skill her helm he guides.
 Confusion from divided councils flows :
 The house one lord shall best obey :
 The state best own one ruler's sway : 565
 Then each the effect of prudent guidance knows.

ANTISTROPHE II.

This truth the daughter of the Spartan king
 Shall witness ; for through fire and flame
 To enjoy another's bed she came :
 Then, while her heart vindictive passions sting, 570
 Rages the unhappy dame of Troy,
 And her poor infant to destroy,
 Wild and tempestuous jealousy is found ;
 Nor gods, nor laws, nor grace it heeds :
 Yet, royal lady, for these deeds 575
 Repentance shall thy soul with anguish wound.
 Together see that pair before the house
 To death adjudged. Unhappy dame ! and thou,
 Unhappy son, who for thy mother's bed
 (Though in the fault no share is thine, nor charge
 Of aught offending 'gainst thy lords) shalt die. 581
 AND. Bound in these galling chains, behold, my
 hands

Thus bleeding, I am sent beneath the earth.
 MOL. My mother, O my mother, I too go,
 Beneath thy wing, a victim to their hate. 585
 Ye potent lords of Phthia's realm, O come,
 My father, come, and aid thy suffering friends !
 AND. Thou, my loved child, on thy dead mother's
 breast,

Beneath the earth a lifeless corse shalt lie.
 MOL. Ah me, unhappy me, what wo is mine ! 590
 Thou too, my mother, hast thy share of wo.
 MEN. Hence to the realms of darkness ; for you
 came

From hostile towers : beneath a twofold force
 You die ; thy doom is by my voice denounced,

And by Hermione thy son's: the height 595
 Of madness were it to spare foes from foes
 Descended, when the power presents itself
 To kill them, and to free our house from fear.

AND. My husband, O my husband! noble son
 Of Priam! O that to mine aid thy hand 600
 Were present now, and thy protecting spear!

MOL. Unhappy me! what words, what suasive
 strain,
 Shall I now find of power to avert my fate?

AND. Go to thy lord; hang on his knees, my son;
 With suppliant word entreat him:

MOL. O, be kind, 605
 Be kind to me—relent, and spare my life!

AND. This melts me, and mine eyes are moist
 with tears,

As drops the sunless rock; unhappy me!

MOL. What shall I find (ah me!) what remedy
 Effectual to relieve me from my ills? 610

MEN. Why dost thou roll thee at my knees? why
 thus

Address thy prayers to me? The assailing wave
 Moves not the rock. My children claim my aid;
 Nothing of tenderness I feel for thee;
 For great part of my life I spent to take 615
 Troy and thy mother: her shalt thou enjoy,
 And with her to the infernal Pluto go.

CHO. The royal Peleus I behold, with speed
 His aged foot advancing: he is here.

PELEUS, MENELAUS, ANDROMACHE, MOLOSSUS, CHORUS.

PEL. To you my question I address, and thee 620
 Enforcing slaughter, what means this, and whence
 Proceeds it? What disease infects the house?
 Why, ere the law gives sentence, are these deeds
 Attempted? Menelaus, forbear, nor haste
 The uncondemn'd to punish. With more speed 625
 Lead thou; for this affair, it seems, delay
 Admits not. Now, if ever, I could wish

The strength of youth restored ; but in her sails
 First I will breathe a favouring gale. Inform me,
 What justice pleading, these have bound thy hands
 In chains, and lead thee and thy sons away : 631
 For in my absence, and thy lord's, to death,
 Thee, like a sheep, with her poor lamb, they drag.

AND. Age-honour'd king, thus, as thou seest, they
 lead

Me and my son to death. What shall I say? 635
 Not one alone, but many messengers
 Earnest I sent to call thee. Thou hast heard,
 Perchance, what discord rages in the house,
 Raised by his daughter ; and for this I die.
 Now from the shrine of Thetis, who to thee 640
 Brought forth thy noble son, and whom thou holdest
 In reverence high, they lead me, dragg'd by force,
 Nor course of justice hold, nor their return
 Await who from the house are absent now ;
 But, knowing me defenceless, and my son, 645
 Whom, though in naught offending, they to death
 Doom with his wretched mother. But, O king,
 An humble suppliant at thy knees I fall ;
 Thy reverend beard these chains forbid my hand
 To stroke : protect me, by the gods, I beg ! 650
 O, save me ! but if not, my death, to me
 Calamitous, on you will bring disgrace.

PEL. Unbind her, I command you ; from her hands
 Take off the chains, or some of you shall rue it.

MEN. And I forbid it, one in naught to thee 655
 Inferior, but o'er her of greater power.

PEL. What ! art thou come to lord it in my house,
 O'er those at Sparta not content to rule ? 658

MEN. At Troy she was the captive of my spear.

PEL. But given an honour'd prize to Phthia's chief.

MEN. Have I not power o'er his, and he o'er mine ?

PEL. For good, not ill, nor to be slain by force.

MEN. Her from my hand thou never shalt with-
 draw.

PEL. Beneath this sceptre then thy head shall
 bleed.

MEN. Touch me, or come but near me, thou shalt
know— 665

PEL. Shalt thou 'mong men be reckoned, thou
most vile,

And from the vile descended? What hast thou
Of manly, by a Phrygian who thy bride
Didst lose, thy house unbarr'd, unguarded left,
As if thy wife, the worst of all her sex, 670
Knew what discretion was? Nor, were her will
Disposed, could one of Sparta's female race
Be modest, where the virgins quit the house,
And, with uncinctured vests and naked thighs,
Mix with young men contending in the race, 675
And share the athletic sports, not, as I think,
To be allow'd: what marvel if, thus train'd,
Your daughters are not chaste? This should be
ask'd

Of Helen, who forsook her nuptial bed,
Wantonly wandering to a foreign land 680
With a young stranger. For her sake, in arms
Assembled, all those numerous powers of Greece
Thou ledd'st to Troy: her with disdain to quit
Behooved thee more; and, having found her false,
Not to have stirr'd a spear, but let her there 685
Remain; nay, ev'n to have added a reward,
That thou mightst never take her home again.
Yet with no prosperous gale didst thou pursue
Thy fond desire, but, many noble lives
Destroy'd, make mothers childless in their house,
And hoary fathers of their generous sons 691
Deprive, of whom, unhappy, I am one:
For as the murderer of Achilles, thee,
Like some Tartarean pest that joys in blood,
I view. Unwounded thee alone from Troy 695
Greece saw return'd; and in their splendid case
Thy splendid arms, as they were thither borne,
Brought back. Before his nuptials, oft my voice
Gave him monition not to form with thee

Alliance, nor receive within his house 700
 From a bad mother one that had her birth ;
 For such bring with them all their mother's faults.
 Ye wooers, this your fix'd attention claims ;
 Daughters of virtuous mothers make your brides.
 Besides, thy brother basely didst thou wrong, 705
 Impelling him most foolishly to slay
 His daughter ; such thy fear lest thy base wife
 Thou shouldst not gain. When thou hadst van-
 quish'd Troy

(For that I now must mention), and thy wife
 A captive was deliver'd to thy hands, 710
 Thou didst not kill her ; but her beauteous breast
 Soon as thou saw'st, thou threw'st thy sword away,
 And with a kiss receivedst her, making court
 To the unblushing traitress, thou most vile,
 Master'd by wanton appetite ; and next 715
 To my son's house thou camest ; and, spreading
 there

Thy ravage, in his absence, without shame,
 Murder'st a wretched woman, and her son,
 Who, though of spurious birth, shall make thee rue,
 Ay, and thy daughter too, your base attempt : 720
 For oft the thirsty land will teem with grain,
 Richer than harvests on a deeper soil ;
 And of the spurious sons in worth excel
 Those of legitimate birth. Vaunt not thyself,
 But bear thy daughter hence. A man allied 725
 To one of meaner rank, if faithful, finds
 More honour than from those who proudly boast
 Their greatness : but to nothing hast thou claim.

CHO. The tongue from small beginnings raises
 strife,

Till it exceeds all bounds ; but caution curbs 730
 The prudent from contention with their friends.

MEN. Why of the aged should we speak as wise,
 Once with sage counsels guiding Greece ? When
 thou,

The honour'd Peleus, of illustrious birth

And high alliance, utter'st words which cast 735
 Shame on thyself, and high reproach on us,
 For a barbaric woman, whom to chase
 Beyond the streams of Nile, beyond the banks
 Of Phasis, nor to cease exciting me,
 Behooves thee more, as one of Asia's realms, 740
 Where many sons of Greece lie stretch'd in death
 Beneath the spear, not guiltless of the blood
 Of thy brave son ; for Paris, by whose hand
 Thy son Achilles fell, was Hector's brother ;
 She Hector's wife ; yet dost thou deign with her
 Beneath one roof to lodge, with her to share 746
 One table, and permittest her to bear
 Sons in the house most hateful to my soul.
 Her, through my provident care for thee, old man,
 And for myself, when I would put to death, 750
 She from my hands is forced away. But come,
 To reason with thee naught of base iners,
 Naught of reproach. If from my daughter springs
 No child, and sons sprout from her bed, the lords
 Of Phthia wilt thou make them ? Shall they reign
 O'er Grecians, they, sprung from barbaric race ? 756
 Am I unwise then hating things unjust,
 And hast thou claim to wisdom ? Nay, revolve
 This in thy mind : thy daughter hadst thou given
 In marriage to some youth of Phthia's realm, 760
 Had she been treated thus, wouldst thou sit down
 In silence ? Otherwise of thee I deem.
 Yet for a stranger, 'gainst thy friends, allied
 By nearest ties, reproaches dost thou vent.
 The wife hath with the husband equal right, 765
 If wrong'd by him ; save that the man, whose house
 Is by his wife's immodest folly shamed,
 In his own hands hath ample power ; but she
 Seeks through her parents and her friends redress.
 Just is it then that I my daughter aid. 770
 Old age, old age is on thee : when thy tongue
 Mentions the martial powers I led to war,
 More honour than from silence I receive.

The offence of Helen sprung not from her will,
 But from the gods; yet this to Greece hath wrought
 Advantage high, and raised her sons, before 776
 Unskill'd in arms and inexpert in war,
 To martial prowess; for each science best
 Man from experience learns. If, when my wife
 Was brought into my sight, I check'd my hand, 780
 And slew her not, my mind obey'd the rule
 Of temperate wisdom; and I wish thy hand,
 Had not slain Phocus. These things have I urged
 At large, benevolent to thee, old man,
 And not through anger: but if rage inflames 785
 Thy mind, the intemperance of thy tongue may
 rise

Yet higher; me a provident care avails.

CHO. Forbear these vain and angry words, for this
 Were better far, lest both be in the wrong.

PEL. How ill this custom hath through Greece
 obtain'd 790

A sanction! When the trophies of their foes
 A conquering host erects, they are not deem'd
 The achievement of their hands who toil'd in fight;
 But the renown their leader bears away,
 Who amid thousands shook a single spear, 795
 Nor more than one perform'd; yet he obtains
 More glory. So in states, those who sit high,
 To civil power exalted, swell in thought,
 As wiser than the people, though to worth
 They have no claim, for thousands might be found
 'Mong these more wise, had they but confidence, 801

783 Phocus was also the son of Æacus. Pausanias mentions his tomb, and says that a rough stone lies on it; the same which Peleus and Telamon used for a disk in the exercises of the pentathlon, to which they had invited their brother: when Peleus in his turn came to try his strength, he designedly hurled this stone against Phocus, and killed him. Peleus and Telamon committed this base action to gratify their mother, who was the daughter of Sciron. The mother of Phocus was the sister of Thetis.

And will to show their powers : in proof of this,
 Thou and thy brother your high state assume,
 Elated by your proud command in arms,
 And triumph over Troy, by the brave deeds 805
 And toils of others raised. But I will show thee,
 That not Idæan Paris I esteem
 A greater foe of Peleus, if this house
 Thou quit not with all speed, and take with thee
 Thy childless daughter ; else the chief from me 810
 Descended hence will drive her, by the hair
 Dragg'd through his house. A mother's joys to her
 Unknown, the fruitful bed she will not brook :
 But shall she make us childless, through mischance
 If with a child she never hath been bless'd ? 81
 Stand from her, slaves, that I may know who dares
 Oppose me, while I free her hands from chains.
 Hold up thy head, and be assured that I,
 Though trembling, will untie these twisted bonds.
 O, thou most vile, thus couldst thou gall these hands ?
 Some bull or lion, didst thou ween, in links 821
 Thus strain'd to bind ? or fear lest she should seize
 A sword, and drive thee off ? Come hither, child ·
 Beneath my arms unbind thy mother's chains :
 In Phthia will I nurture thee, to these 825
 A mighty foe. Except your boast in arms,
 Your martial pride, you Spartans in naught else
 An excellence unknown to others claim.

CHO. Old age is hasty, soon to choler moved,
 And, while that lasts, impatient of control. 830

MEN. Thou to reproach with headlong rage art
 borne ;
 But I at Phthia will by violence
 Do nothing wrong, nor bear it. A long stay
 My leisure now allows not : I return :
 For near to Sparta is a state once join'd 835
 In friendly league, now bent on hostile deeds :
 'Gainst this my warlike forces will I lead,
 And bend them to obedience : all things there
 Establish'd as I would, I will with speed

Revisit Phthia, and, its chief return'd, 840
 Inform him face to face what are my thoughts,
 And be inform'd what his are : if inclined
 To punish her, and show respect to us
 In future, like respect shall he receive
 If angry, he shall find an anger high 845
 As his, and deeds responding to his deeds.
 What thou canst say I bear unmoved ; a voice
 Indeed is thine ; but, as a shadow void
 Of active power, thou canst do naught but talk.

PEL. Go forward, child, beneath my sheltering
 arms, 850

And thou, unhappy dame : the raging storm
 Escaped, in harbour thou art now secure.

AND. O reverend king, may the gods pour on thee
 Their blessings, and on thine, for that my son,
 And me, a wretched woman, from base wrong 855
 Thou hast protected : yet take heed, lest now,
 Crouching in ambush, on the desert road
 By force they bear me off, thy hoary age
 Perceiving, and my weakness, and my son
 An infant : weigh these things, lest our escape 860
 Avail us nothing, if hereafter seized.

PEL. Do not enforce a woman's fears on me.
 Go : who shall touch you ? He who dares shall
 weep :

For (so the gods have graced me) troops of horse,
 And numerous foot at Phthia I command. 865
 I too am firm in strength, nor, as thou deem'st,
 With years enfeebled : should I only look
 On such a man, old as I am, of him
 A trophy I should raise : for many youths
 An old man, if his courage glows, excels. 870
 A dastard, what doth strength of limb avail ?

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

'Twere better not to have been born,
 If we derive not our pure blood

From honour'd parents great and good,
 Whose splendid house rich stores adorn. 875
 The nobly-born against the storms of fate
 Find friendly powers to guard their state :
 Honour and fame the great and good attend,
 Nor with their life their glories end,
 Not Time itself hath force to efface 880
 Immortal Virtue's radiant grace.

ANTISTROPHE.

'Twere better conquest not to gain,
 Where evil fame attends its course ;
 When malice and unrighteous force
 Proud o'er insulted Justice reign. 885
 This may be sweet to man for one brief day ;
 The next its glories fade away,
 And infamy breathes baleful blasts around.
 Glorious that house, that state is found,
 Where power usurps no harsh command, 890
 Till awful Justice arms its hand.

EPODE.

Age-honour'd king, whose generous blood
 Derives from Æacus its source ;
 Thou, when the Lapithæ embattled stood,
 And the fierce Centaurs shook the dreadful spear,
 Stood'st foremost in the dangerous war, 896
 Dauntless in arms to quell their monstrous force.
 Thee to the gallant Argo bore
 The black, inhospitable Euxine o'er,
 Through clashing rocks, whose threatening brow
 Frowns o'er the roaring deep below. 901
 When first Alcides to the ground
 Vindictive bow'd Troy's rampired pride,
 And spread the raging slaughter wide,
 Was Peleus then inactive found ? 905
 Eurotas heard thy honour'd name
 Equall'd with Jove's illustrious son's in fame.

FEMALE ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

ATT. My much-loved friends, how ill's succeed to
ills

This day! My royal mistress in the house,
Hermione, forsaken by her father, 910
And conscious of her deeds, the attempt to kill
Andromache and her poor child, is bent
To die, her husband fearing, lest with shame
She from the house, for what is done, be driven,
Or suffer death, intending death to those 915
Whom it had ill beseem'd her to have slain.
Scarce from the fatal noose the slaves, her guards,
Restrain her, from her hand scarce wrench the
sword;

Such deep despondence rends her trembling heart,
Conscious of deeds which honour cannot own. 920
I am quite spent, my friends, restraining her
From acts of desperation: go you in,
And save her from her violent attempts;
For with more influence the new-arrived
Enforce persuasion, than domestic friends. 925

CHO. The cry of the attendants in the house
We hear, thy words confirming; and she soon,
Unhappy lady, will give proof how high
Her sorrow swells for her atrocious deeds;
For forth she rushes, from her servants' hands 930
Bursting by force; such her desire to die.

HERMIONE, ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

HER. O, wretched, wretched me! thus will I rend
My tresses; with my nails thus tear my cheeks.

ATT. What wilt thou do, my child? destroy thy
form?

HER. Thus from my hair my finely-textured veil
I rend, and toss it to the winds of heaven. 936

ATT. Cover thy breasts, my child; compose thy
robes.

HER. Why should I cover with my robes my
breasts?

What I have done is to my husband's eye
Uncover'd, unconceal'd, conspicuous, clear. 940

ATT. Springs from thy rival's purposed death thy
grief?

HER. That hostile, that audacious deed distracts
My soul: ah me, accursed, by men accursed!

ATT. Thy husband will forgive thee that offence.

HER. Ah, from my hands why didst thou wrest
the sword? 945

Give it me back, give it me back, my friend,
That I may plunge it deep into my breast.
Why from the strangling cord dost thou restrain
me?

ATT. Should I then leave thee, rest of sense, to
die?

HER. Alas, my fate! Where is the welcome flame
That blazes to consume me? From what height 951
Shall I plunge headlong in the sea beneath,
Or cast me from the mountain's woody steep,
That I may die, and join the pitying shades?

ATT. Why this impassion'd grief? Affliction
knows 955

Its hour, Heaven-sent, all mortals to attend.

HER. My father, thou hast left me, left me here,
Like a wreck'd vessel, destitute of oars,
Driven on the lonely strand; and ruin soon,
Ruin will reach me. In that house, which once 960
A bride I enter'd, I shall dwell no more.

A suppliant, to whose statues shall I fly?
Or, sentenced to quit Phthia, fall a slave
At a slave's knees? O, that I were a bird
Of dusky wing, or the swift bark, which first 965
Braved the rough Euxine, and its clashing rocks!

ATT. Thy violence, my child, I did not praise
Before, which wrong'd the Trojan dame; nor now
That violence of fear which shakes thy soul.
Now will thy husband thy alliance spurn, 970
Persuaded by the insidious, glozing words
Of a barbaric woman; for he holds thee

Not as a prize of war from conquer'd Troy.
 The daughter of a man for worth renown'd,
 With a rich dowry, from a state that boasts 975
 No small degree of glory, as his bride
 Thee he received. Nor will thy father thus
 Betray thee, as thy fears suggest, my child,
 Nor let thee suffer wrong. But go thou in ;
 Thyself to public view before the house 980
 Expose not, lest thou wake reproach, my child.

CHO. This way with hasty steps a stranger bends ;
 His habit marks him from some foreign land.

ORESTES, HERMIONE, CHORUS.

ORES. Ye female strangers, say, is this the house,
 The royal mansion of Achilles' son ? 985

CHO. It is : but this inquiring, who art thou ?

ORES. 'The son of Agamemnon and his queen ;
 My name Orestes ; to the oracle
 Of Dodonæan Jove I hold my way.
 Since I am come to Phthia, where resides 990
 A lady near allied to me by blood,
 Whether she lives, and Fortune's favouring smile
 Enjoys, affection prompts me to inquire :
 Hermione of Sparta ; though she dwells
 In realms from us remote, she yet is dear. 995

HER. O son of Agamemnon, from the storm
 Thou art a harbour to the labouring bark :
 An humble suppliant at thy knees I beg.
 Have pity on me, for thou seest my state
 Not happy ; 'round thy knees my arms I twine, 1000
 Not of less potency than hallow'd wreaths.

ORES. Ha ! What means this ? Doth some illu-
 sion mock

My sense, or Phthia's queen do I behold
 Indeed, the daughter of the Spartan king ?

HER. Me, and me only in my father's house, 1005
 Be thou assured, did Spartan Helen bear.

ORES. O Phœbus, healing power, relieve these
 ills !

Flow thy afflictions from the gods, or men ?

HER. Some from myself, and from my husband
some,
Some from the gods : on all sides ruin threats. 1010

ORES. Whence to a woman, who no child hath
borne,
Can sorrow rise, save for her injured bed ?

HER. Thence is my grief : well dost thou prompt
my tongue.

ORES. Another loves thy lord, estranged from
thee ?

HER. The captive wife of Hector shares his bed.

ORES. This is foul wrong, that one man takes two
wives. 1016

HER. Ev'n thus it is ; and then I sought revenge.

ORES. On her a woman's vengeance didst thou
seek ?

HER. Death to herself, and to her spurious son.

ORES. Is she then slain, or snatch'd by chance
from death ? 1020

HER. By Peleus, favouring her unrighteous cause.

ORES. Hadst thou who bore in this attempt a share ?

HER. My father, who for this from Sparta came.

ORES. Was he defeated by the old man's hand ?

HER. By shame : forsaken he hath left me here.

ORES. Thy husband for the attempt, I see, thou
fearest. 1026

HER. Well dost thou judge ; for me he will destroy,
And justly : what behooves me else to say ?

But I conjure thee, and invoke high Jove,
From whom we draw our race, convey me far, 1030
Far from this land, or to my father's house ;

For ev'n these walls, had they a voice, I think,
Would drive me hence ; and all the realm of Phthia
Detests me. Leaving the oracular shrine

Of Phœbus, should my husband first return 1035

Home, he will kill me for my shameful deeds ;

Or to the spurious bed, o'er which my power
Was sovereign once, I shall be made a slave.

ORES. What led thee then (forgive the word) to offend?

HER. The converse of bad women ruin'd me, 1040
 Who oft address'd me with this unsound speech:—
 “Wilt thou permit a captive, a base slave,
 To dwell beneath thy roof, and share thy bed?
 By heaven's dread empress, in my house the light
 Of yon bright sun a rival should not see.” 1045
 I to these sirens lent my easy ears,
 These specious, versatile, insidious pests,
 And raised to folly's gale my swelling thoughts:
 For why behooved it me with awe to view 1049
 My husband? All things, which became my state,
 Were mine; abundant wealth was mine; my house
 I, as it pleased me, ruled; I might have borne
 Legitimate offspring, while her sons to mine
 Had been half-slaves. But never (more than once
 Let me repeat it), never let the wise 1055
 Give females license to frequent his house,
 And hold free converse with his wife; for these
 To ill are shrewd instructors: through the hope
 Of sordid lucre, one corrupts his wife;
 One, who hath fallen from virtue, like herself 1060
 Wishes to make her vile; and many urge,
 Through wanton forwardness, their pleas to ill:
 Hence the pure fountain of domestic bliss
 The husband finds polluted: these against
 Let him guard well his gates with locks and bolts;
 For nothing good these female visitants 1066
 Work by their converse, but abundant ill.

CHO. 'Gainst thine own sex too freely hath thy
 tongue

Inveigh'd; yet this may be forgiven thee now:
 But woman woman's nature should commend. 1070

ORES. Wisdom was his, who first instructed man
 In person of affairs to be inform'd.
 I, knowing the confusion of this house,
 And all the variance 'twixt thee and the wife
 Of Hector, waited not, with cold regard 1075

Attending, to be told thy will, if here
 To abide, or, dreading with well-grounded fear
 A captive woman, to withdraw thee hence ;
 But came, not waiting thy commands, if such
 Thy cause of grief as I have heard from thee, 1080
 To bear thee from this house ; for thou wast mine
 Before, though by thy father's falseness now
 Thou dwellest with this man ; for, e'er he march'd
 Against the Trojan state, to me he pledged
 Thy hand in marriage ; afterward to him, 1085
 Who calls thee now his wife, he promised thee,
 If he would lay the towers of Troy in dust.
 To Phthia when the victor chief return'd,
 Him (for thy father patient I forgave)
 Thy nuptials to relinquish I implored, 1090
 Urging my fortunes, and the vengeful powers
 Who then afflicted me ; that I, perchance,
 Among my friends, by blood allied, might wed ;—
 A' grace, from strangers to an outcast wretch,
 Outcast like me, not easily indulged 1095
 My suit his fiery insolence rejects,
 Upbraids me with the murder of my mother,
 And the grim visaged Furies. In despair
 (For then the fortunes of my house were low),
 I grieved indeed, but silent bore my grief, 1100
 With my afflictions sunk, and went away,
 Of thee, against my soul's warm wish, deprived.
 But now, since thou hast found a wayward change
 Of fortune, and thy heart desponding sinks,
 I from this house will lead thee, guard thee well, 1105
 And give thee to thy father's hand ; for strong
 The bond of kindred ; and in ills no zeal
 Is warmer than a friend's by blood allied.

HER. To what concerns my marriage with due
 care

My father will attend : it is not mine 1110
 That to determine. But with quickest speed
 Convey me hence ; lest, should he first return,
 My lord prevent me ; or, should Peleus learn

From his son's house that I have made escape,
He with his fleetest horse pursue my flight. 1115

ORES. Let not the old man's power alarm thy fears;
Nor dread Achilles' son, whose fiery pride
Insulted me: the entangling toils of fate,
Through which he cannot burst, are by this hand
Fix'd against him: these I explain not now, 1120
But their effect the Delian rock shall know.
This murderer of his mother, if the oaths
Of my brave friends hold in the Pythian land
Their faith, shall show him he did wrong to wed
One first to me betrothed; and he shall rue 1125
His call for vengeance for his father's death
On royal Phœbus; nor avails him now
His thought to reverence changed; for by the god,
And through my just resentment, he shall die
A wretched death, and feel my enmity; 1130
For the god gives the fate of foes to change
Reversed, nor pride's aspiring thoughts endures.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O Phœbus, who round Ilium's lofty town
With towers the rampired walls didst crown;
And thou, dread monarch of the main, 1135
By azure steeds whirl'd o'er thy watery reign;
To ruin why those towers consign,
The labour of your hands divine?
Why to the war-skill'd Mars a prey,
The wretched, wretched Troy betray? 1140

ANTISTROPHE I.

You on the banks of Simois to the car
Yoked many a courser train'd to war;
You caused the purple fight to glow,
From which no laurel graced the warrior's brow.
The Dardan monarchs are no more; 1145
Low, low they lie, distain'd with gore.
In Troy from blazing altars rise
No clouds of incense to the skies.

STROPHE II.

Low is the son of Atreus laid ;
 By his wife's hand his blood was spilt ; 1150
 And for his blood her life she paid,
 Her son the avenger of her guilt.
 The god, the god, with dread command
 Arm'd 'gainst her life his chastening hand :
 The son obey'd the oracular shrine : 1155
 He did the deed,
 Then fled with speed,
 And in the hallow'd temple stain'd with blood
 The murderer of his mother stood.
 Can this be true, O Phœbus, power divine ? 1160

ANTISTROPHE II.

In Greece how many mothers sigh,
 And pour the joyless notes of wo,
 Wailing their hapless sons, that lie
 Beneath the Phrygian rampires low !
 And many from their widow'd bed 1165
 Distress'd to other mansions fled.
 On Greece, on Greece the tempest fell :
 Nor thine alone
 To heave the groan,
 Nor thy friends only did its rage destroy ; 1170
 But o'er the fertile fields of Troy
 Roll'd, dropping blood, the thundering storm of hell.

PELEUS, CHORUS.

PEL. To my inquiry, dames of Phthia, give
 Faithful reply : for rumour wide hath spread,
 Though indistinct the tale, that from this house 1175
 The daughter of the Spartan king is fled.
 Through strong desire to know if this be true,
 I come : the fortunes of their absent friends
 Those who remain at home should make their care.
 CHO. What thou hast heard, O king, is true ; nor
 me 1180

Becomes it to conceal the ills, which round
 Enclose me : from the house the queen is fled.

PEL. Of what afraid? Relate to me the whole.

CHO. Dreading her husband, lest he hence should chase her.

PEL. For her severe design to kill his son? 1185

CHO. She further fear'd the captive Trojan dame.

PEL. How fled she? with her father? or with whom?

CHO. The son of Agamemnon bore her hence.

PEL. Led by what hope? Hath he a wish to wed her? 1189

CHO. And thy son's son he forms designs to kill.

PEL. By secret fraud, or in fair fight opposed?

CHO. By Delphians, in Apollo's sacred shrine.

PEL. Ah, this is to be dreaded. One of you
Fly to the Pythian shrine with swiftest speed;
To our friends there each circumstance relate, 1195
Of what hath happen'd here, ere by his foes
The brave son of Achilles basely fall.

MESSENGER, PELEUS, CHORUS.

MES. Ah, what unhappy tidings do I bear
To thee, old man, and all that love my lord!

PEL. My mind presages, as expecting ill. 1200

MES. That ill, O reverend Peleus, thou must know.
Thy son's son is no more, slain by the swords
Deep-wounding of the Delphians, led by one
A stranger of Mycenæ.

CHO. Ah, old man, 1204
What wilt thou do? Nay, fall not; raise thyself.

PEL. O, I am nothing; lost, quite lost; my voice
Fails me; my trembling limbs beneath me fail.

MES. Hear me; if by thy friends thou wouldst re-
venge
The murderous deed, thus sink not; raise thy head.

PEL. O Fate, how heavy dost thou fall on me, 1210
Thus trembling on the extreme verge of age!

How fell the only son of him who was
My only son? I wish, yet dread to hear.

MES. When to Apollo's glorious land we came,

Three bright returns of yon high beaming sun 1215
 We gave to view the wonders of the place :
 This woke suspicion ; and in crowds convened
 Those who dwell there, the people of the god.
 The son of Agamemnon through the town
 Insidious went, instilling in each ear 1220
 Speeches that raise distrust :—" Behold you him,
 Who through the vaulted caverns of the god,
 With gold, the treasured gifts of mortals, stored,
 Observant walks ? A second time he comes,
 The same his purpose as before, to spoil 1225
 The temple of the god." Hence gaining force,
 Malignant rumour through the city flow'd :
 The rulers of the state in council oft,
 And oft in private met ; all, whose high charge
 Presided o'er the treasures of the god, 1230
 And in the pillar'd dome appoint a guard.
 Of this not yet inform'd, the victims fed
 Where high Parnassus waves his leafy groves.
 Received, we nigh the altar stood, with those 1234
 Whose guests we were, and with the Pythian seers.
 Then one thus spoke :—" What shall we ask the gods
 For thee, young man ? What brings thee to this
 shrine ?"
 " I for my past offence," my lord replied,
 " Would make atonement to the god, on whom
 I call'd for vengeance for my father's death." 1240
 The rumour by Orestes spread then show'd
 All its malignant power, as if my lord
 Had utter'd falsehood, and with base intents
 To Delphi came : within the temple's verge
 He enter'd, that before the oracular seat 1245
 His suppliant vows he might to Phæbus pour ;
 And then beside the blazing victim stood.
 Here arm'd with swords a band in ambush lay
 Beneath the laurel's shade ; of these the son
 Of Clytemnestra, whose nefarious mind 1250
 Plann'd all this horrid treachery, was one.
 Standing in open view, my lord address'd

His vows to Phœbus ; they, with pointed swords
 Advancing, thrust at him unarm'd : he steps
 Backwards (for yet he chanced no mortal wound
 To have received), and from a pillar's height 1256
 Snatching the arms there hung, with dauntless port,
 A warrior now in martial terrors clad,
 Stood at the altar, and thus cries aloud :—
 “ Wherefore, ye sons of Delphi, would you kill me ?
 Hither, my steps were holy : for what cause 1261
 Am I destroy'd ?” Though numbers there were nigh,
 Not one replied ; but from their hands hurl'd stones.
 He, by the storm like thickest hail assail'd,
 Held forth his arms ; his shield on this side now,
 On that side now opposing, wards the strokes : 1266
 Yet naught avail'd ; for many darts at once,
 Arrows, spears, javelins, all the weapons used
 In sacrifice, the ground before him strew.
 Thou wouldst have marvell'd hadst thou seen him
 bound, 1270
 The darts avoiding : but, when now they press'd
 To enclose him round, nor gave him breathing time,
 He left the altar's victim-sated hearth,
 And bounding furious, with the dance of Troy
 Rush'd on them : they, like trembling doves that see
 The hawk pursuing, turn their backs in flight ;
 Many promiscuous fall, some by their wounds,
 Some in the strait pass trampled under foot ;
 And from the hallow'd dome unhallow'd cries
 The rocks re-echo'd : like a cloudless sky, 1280
 My lord in glittering arms refulgent stood.
 Till from the middle of the shrine one sent
 A loud and horrid shout, and fired his troops
 To courage, turning them from flight ; then fell
 The brave son of Achilles ; through his sides 1285
 A Delphian driving his sharp-pointed sword,
 With many others, slew him. To the ground
 Soon as he fell, who did not plunge his sword ?
 Who did not hurl and dash him with a stone,
 'Till all his beauteous form with savage wounds 1290

Was mangled ? But his breathless corse, which lay
 Stretch'd nigh the altar, from the incensed shrine
 By them cast forth, we snatch'd with speed away,
 Borne in our arms, and hither bring to thee,
 That thou, old man, mayst heave the groan of grief,
 Bathe it with tears, and grace it with a tomb. 1296
 Thus hath the king, whose voice declares the fates,
 The judge to all mankind of what is just,
 Pour'd vengeance on Achilles' suffering son,
 Like a malignant mortal, old debates 1300
 Bearing in memory : how then is he wise ?

CHO. And see, the king, borne from the Delphic
 land,

Advances to the house. Unhappy he,
 Who suffer'd thus ; unhappy too, old man,
 Art thou ; for thou receivest the lion son 1305
 Of thy Achilles, not as thou dost wish ;
 And thou, on losses and afflictions fallen,
 Art fallen with him beneath one common fate.

PEL. Wretch that I am ! what an affliction this,
 Which here I see, and bear into my house ! 1310
 My heart is rent with sorrow. O thou state
 Of Thessaly, on me hath ruin fallen,
 And desolation ; I have now no race ;
 I have no child remaining in my house.
 Cruel misfortune ! on what friend mine eye 1315
 Shall I now cast, to find in him a joy ?
 O that dear mouth ! those cheeks, those hands, how
 dear !

Better have died beneath the walls of Troy,
 And on the banks of Simois found thy fate !

CHO. He would have then been honour'd in his
 death, 1320

And lighter sorrows had been thine, old man.

PEL. O nuptials, fatal nuptials ! you have brought
 Destruction on this house, and on my state !
 Ah, miserable me ! Would that my house,
 Unhappy through thy marriage-bed, my son, 1325
 Had ne'er received Hermione, a bride

Fatal to thee! Would she had perish'd first,
 That pest of hell, with blasting thunder struck!
 O, that thou ne'er hadst charged thy father's blood,
 Thy noble father, by his arrows slain, 1330
 On Phœbus, nor his vengeful power inflam'd!
 A mortal thou contending with the god!

CHO. O wo, wo, wo! I will begin the strain,
 And wail my dead lord with funereal notes.

PEL. O wo, wo, wo! I to thy mournful notes
 Weeping reply, a poor distress'd old man. 1336

CHO. The god, the god and Fate have wrought
 these woes.

PEL. O thou most dear! ah me! ah me! my
 house
 Hast thou left desolate, forsaking me,
 Childless, unhappy, in my hoary age! 1340

CHO. Thou shouldst have died, old man, before
 thy sons.

PEL. Shall I not rend my hair, and beat my head
 In anguish for my loss? For, O my state!
 Me of two sons Apollo hath deprived. 1344

CHO. O thou, that hast beheld and suffer'd ills,
 Wretched old man! what now must be thy life?

PEL. Childless, forsaken, finding to my ills
 No end, my woes will wait me to the tomb.

CHO. Bless'd in thy nuptials by the gods in vain.

PEL. Those blessings all are vanish'd, lost in air,
 And of their glories not a trace remains. 1351

CHO. Thou wilt live lonely in a lonely house.

PEL. My state is now no more a state to me:
 Farewell, my sceptre! to the ground I throw thee.
 And thou, O nymph, dwelling in secret caves, 1355
 Daughter of Nereus, shalt behold me sunk
 In total ruin, prostrate on the earth.

CHO. Ah me! what means this motion? I per-
 ceive

Some power divine: look, virgins, look: some god,
 Borne through the ether in yon silver cloud, 1360
 Enters the plains of Phthia famed for steeds.

THETIS, PELEUS, CHORUS.

THE. Peleus, this grace thy former nuptials claim:
 Leaving her father's house, thy Thetis comes,
 And first exhorts thee for thy present ills
 Not to indulge excess of grief. Ev'n I, 1365
 Who for my children ought not to have dew'd
 Mine eyes with tears, have lost my son by thee,
 The swift Achilles, noblest of the Greeks.
 Now for what cause I came I will declare:
 Do thou attend. This dead son of Achilles 1370
 Entomb; but bear him to the Pythian shrine,
 To Delphi a disgrace, as, buried there,
 His monument will witness the foul deed
 Committed by Orestes' murderous hand.
 In the Molossian land the captive dame, 1375
 Andromache, must dwell, with holy rites
 Wedded to Helenus; and that her son,
 The sole remaining pledge of the high race
 Of Æacus,—the crown is his: from him
 A long successive line of kings shall rise, 1380
 And in Molossia hold the imperial power
 With glory: for thy race, old man, and mine,
 Must not in total ruin sink, nor Troy's;
 For to the gods she yet is dear, though low
 In dust by hostile Pallas lie her towers. 1385
 But thee (that thou mayst know what grace attends
 My bed, a goddess born, a god my sire)
 I from the ills of mortal life will free
 And give thee immortality: thenceforth
 Thou in the house of Nereus shalt reside, 1390
 A god with me a goddess: thence, thy foot
 Unmoisten'd with the ocean waves, thy son
 And mine, the loved Achilles, thou shalt see
 Residing in his insular domain,
 The promontory Leuce, which o'erhangs 1395
 The Euxine straits. Go, then; to Delphi, built

1392 To walk through the sea without wetting the feet was a mark of divinity.

By hands divine, bear this dead body : there
 Entomb it : thence the cave of Sepias, form'd
 By beating billows in the ancient rock,
 Revisit ; there await me, till my train 1400
 Of fifty Nereids from the sea I bring
 To lead thee hence ; for thou must bear what Fate
 Decrees ; and this the will of Jove. But cease
 Thy sorrows for the dead ; for from the gods
 Long hath this fatal sentence been decreed 1405
 To all the race of mortals :—they must die.

PEL. Thou generous, thou revered, espoused
 nymph,
 Daughter of Nereus, hail ! Worthy thyself,
 Worthy thy sons, these things hast thou disposed.
 Goddess, at thy high bidding I will cease 1410
 My sorrows, and, his funeral rites perform'd,
 Go to the cave of Pelion, where these arms
 Encircled first that beauteous form divine.
 He who is train'd in wisdom's lore, his bride
 Will take from generous lineage, and betroth 1415
 His daughter to the virtuous, nor desire
 Alliance with the base, ev'n though she bring
 A rich and splendid dowry to his house :
 For from the gods such shall no grace attend.

CHO. With various hand the gods dispense our
 fates ; 1420
 Now showering various blessings, which our hopes
 Dared not aspire to ; now controlling ills
 We deem'd inevitable : thus the god
 To these hath given an end exceeding thought.
 Such is the awful fortune of this day. 1425

1398 The cave of Sepias was in a promontory near Iolcos ;
 here Peleus first wooed Thetis

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